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# **HOW TO DEVELOP A GLOBAL SERVICE CONCEPT AND ADAPT IT TO LOCAL MARKET?**

Case ICIUM Wonderworld of Ice




Bachelor's thesis

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ABSTRACT

This study is commissioned by Futuvision Technologies Oy. Futuvision Technologies Oy is an International Cooperation whose mission is to serve as the bridge between China and Europe. In 2010, Futuvision Technologies Oy launched a new project in Finland called ICIUM – Wonderland of Ice. The ICIUM concept is a unique winter entertainment and experience concept combining the magic of Lapland with Chinese Mystique. Starting from winter 2010, every year, a brand new ICIUM Wonderland of Ice is created by China's most talented ice sculptors in Levi, Lapland.

The aim of the thesis is to review ICIUM season 2010-2011 from a service, management and marketing point of view and to find out challenges and solutions to these potential problems. In order to describe and analysis ICIUM service concept in full range, the theoretical part is divided into the researches and studies in tourism service and tourism marketing fields. The theoretical framework introduces the important elements in a successful service business such as service quality, service design and tourism marketing plan etc. In addition to books and internet resources, internal materials and questionnaires are also used to research in this study.

Through a thorough analysis, based on the theories and empirical evidences, the author in this study lists all the challenges and provides the solutions to the challenges correspondingly. To summarize the results, for a global service concept like ICIUM- Wonderland of Ice, it is crucial to maintain the uniqueness of the unified service concept regardless of locations. On the other hands, in order to adapt the global service concept to the local markets, the targeted consumers' needs, expectations and the utilization of local resources and partnerships have to be studied.

**Keywords** Tourism, theme park, ICIUM, marketing, service

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## 1 INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Brief introduction of tourism industry and tourism in Finland

#### 1.1.1 Short introduction of tourism industry

Since the last century, tourism has become one of the most popular activities. It is regarded as one of the most preferred leisure activities all over the world. With the development of travelling activities, a set of integrated services has been established forming the modern tourism industry. Thus, nowadays, tourism is not only an important activity, but also an important element for countries and their economies. Tourists, defined by World Tourism Organization, as people ‘travelling to and staying in places outside their usual environment for not more than one consecutive year for leisure, business and other purpose’ consumes for services and merchandises within the tourism activity. During the procedure, a huge amount of income is generated and a lot of employment opportunities are created in service sectors associated with tourism industry.

In 2011, international tourism receipts exceeded US\$ 1 trillion for the first time, up from US\$ 928 billion in 2010. In real terms, receipts grew by 3.8%, following a 4.6% increase in international tourist arrivals. An additional US\$ 196 billion in receipts from international passenger transport brought total exports generated by international tourism in 2011 to US\$ 1.2 trillion. (World Tourism Organization, 2012.)

#### 1.1.2 Finnish tourism industry and tourism in winter of northern Finland

In 2010, in Finnish domestic tourism market, almost 6 million domestic leisure trips with paid accommodation and almost 4 million domestic business trips with overnights were made by Finnish residents. The figures increased by 13 percent from 2009. (These data derive from Statistics Finland’s Finnish Travel Survey for which 16,659 people aged 15 to 74 permanently resident in Finland were interviewed, 2011.)

In 2011, Finland received 7.3 million foreign visitors. The number of foreign visitors increased by 17 percent from 2010; this represents one million visitors. Foreign visitors brought EUR 2.2 billion to Finland, which was approximately EUR 180 million more than in the previous year. (Statistics from Border Interview Survey by Statistics Finland and Finnish Tourist Board, 2012.)

In northern Finland, the snow season starts from November and lasts until late April to May. The main tourism activity in Northern Finland is skiing including alpine skiing and cross-country skiing. In addition to skiing, a full service package is provided to tourists including snow and ice sculptures exhibitions, almost all the other activities are also associated with the season and snow.

### 1.2 Futuvision

#### 1.2.1 General information of Futuvision Group

Futuvision is a group of companies operating in Europe and China with a common mission to serve as a bridge between China and Europe. It is composed of three companies in Finland and five affiliates in China. Through its multifaceted operation, Futuvision Group aims to share information and cultural knowledge about China, and help European individuals, companies and organizations enter the Chinese market and mindset, and vice versa for clients in China. All the operations Futuvision Group conducts – media production, communications services, consultation, investment channeling, and training - are related to China. Futuvision Group focuses on helping all individuals, companies and organizations interested in operating in Europe or China to fulfill their mission.

#### 1.2.2 Company history

Futuvision was founded in 1994 by Infosto ETC Oy. It has been called Trade Point Finland Co., Ltd since October 2000, when the management takeover of the company took place. Trade Point Finland (Futuvision) was established with the goal of promoting a free flow of capital, human resources, international trade and technologies by utilizing the potential internet brought in. With the awareness of the potential development of China becoming one of the most important economic powers in coming years, Futuvision has put its major effort to develop business relationship with Chinese counterparties and business people. It was then one of the most active “trade points” from Europe constantly engaging in the development of business relationship in China. (Internal material from Futuvision )

After the management takeover in 2000, the goal of Futuvision has been firmly set to be the best Finnish company in promoting trade, investment, human resource and technologies exchange between Finland and China. Since 2004, Futuvision has also engaged in content production across all media in different languages and formats, as well as in event management and cultural exchange between Europe and China. (Internal material from Futuvision )

#### 1.2.3 Futuvision Technologies Oy

Futuvision Technologies Oy is a subsidiary company of Futuvision Group. It operates and provides business advisory services, which is one of the main businesses of Futuvision Group. The advisory services constitute a large variety of actions that Futuvision is ready and able to make, when it comes to helping Finnish/European and Chinese companies in their business endeavors. Futuvision sees itself as a matchmaker, since the key in practically all of the processes is finding a suitable partner in the target country. (Internal material from Futuvision )

To Chinese customers Futuvision provides advisory for their long-term establishment strategy into Finland and Europe. These services are mainly related to direct investment and acquisition activities since many Chinese state-owned and private companies are expanding their overseas presence. Futuvision aims to be a long-term partner providing European expertise in business management. Futuvision is also ready to operate in a joint-venture level with Chinese customers in Finland. (Internal material from Futuvision )

To Finnish and European customers Futuvision provides advisory for their long term establishing strategy into China. The services are made possible through Futuvision's deep connections to Chinese media and to governmental and local governmental institutes. Futuvision can provide a unique "speed track" service offering a combination of official contacts and media exposure. (Internal material from Futuvision)

The mission of Futuvision Technologies Oy is to draw on in-depth knowledge of China and extensive contact networks to generate ample business opportunities, all the while adhering to the principle of sustainable development. The vision of Futuvision Technologies Oy is to create solutions that will bring tangible benefits for all parties by combining the resources of Chinese business partners, the prospects presented by the vast Chinese market and Finnish technological innovation. (Internal material from Futuvision)

The company has two company values- Business is People and Half a Step Ahead. The company has a belief that People are the number one driver for innovation and networking success. By bringing the right people together, we can create a dynamic environment, which will foster fruitful cooperation in the sector of technological development. Futuvision Technologies always aspires to stay half a step ahead of the competition. In a world where technological innovation and market shifts rarely occur synchronously, having physical presence both in China and Europe ensures that we always stay on top of the latest trends and market developments. (Internal material from Futuvision)

### 1.3 ICIUM – Wonderworld of Ice

#### 1.3.1 Short introduction of ICIUM service concept

The ICIUM concept is a unique entertainment and experience concept developed by Futuvision Technologies. ICIUM is a wonder world of ice that offers experiences, adventures and togetherness for families as well as businesses and business clients.

The ICIUM concept stems from Futuvision's 2-decade long bridge building between Europe and China. Through its extensive networks in China Futuvision has been building connections for example with the organizers of Harbin International Ice and Snow Sculpture Festival, which is one of the world's largest ice and snow festivals. Futuvision sees a great potential

for this type of service concept in Europe and now it has an ambition to utilize its unique access to the pool of Chinese artists and other partners and develop the ICIUM concept. (ICIUM project plan, internal material)

### 1.3.2 Short introduction of ICIUM theme park

Every year a brand new ICIUM theme park is created by China's most talented ice sculptors. A new theme is defined for each year's ICIUM, and the theme follows the synopsis of Mingming panda's adventures. Mingming panda and Nina reindeer are the mascots of ICIUM. They can be seen on all the ICIUM marketing material, and their figures are welcoming each visitor directly at the ICIUM gate.

The first ICIUM was built in Finnish Lapland, at a holiday resort Levi for the winter 2010-2011. The season for outdoor ICIUM starts one week before Christmas and ends in April. Levi holiday resort offer suitable conditions for building an outdoor ICIUM because the average temperature is below -7 °C already in November. Snow can be made with the help of snow blowers, and the surrounding lakes and rivers provide the raw material for ice structures.

In addition to the sculptures made in the theme park, merchandises related to the theme are also sold in the park.

In the future a solid ICIUM Wonderworld of Ice franchising concept will be developed. There will be ICIUM winter entertainment experiences at indoor halls in the biggest cities around Europe, and later also in other continents (ICIUM marketing plan, internal material)

### 1.3.3 Short introduction of the destination market – Levi Ski Resort

Levi is located in the heart of Lapland in northern Finland. It is located in the Fell Lapland, in the middle of pure nature and large wilderness areas. Levi Fell village is actually a small holiday town, which offers a wide range of first-rate services to the guests. In Levi, there are 26 lifts and 45 pistes for alpine skiing. In addition, there are maintained skiing tracks of 230km and maintained snowmobile routes of 886km. (Levi official website)





Figure 1 The location of Levi (map from website: lappi.fi)

Levi Ski Resort was chosen to ICIUM project since it offers perfect conditions for this kind of park because already in November the average temperature there is below  $-7^{\circ}\text{C}$ . With some 600,000 visitors per year, Levi is the biggest ski resort in Finland along with Ruka, offering a platform for many kinds of marketing activities. The figure below shows the market share of the top 10 ski resorts in Finland in 2010. (ICIUM handbook, Futuision internal material.)

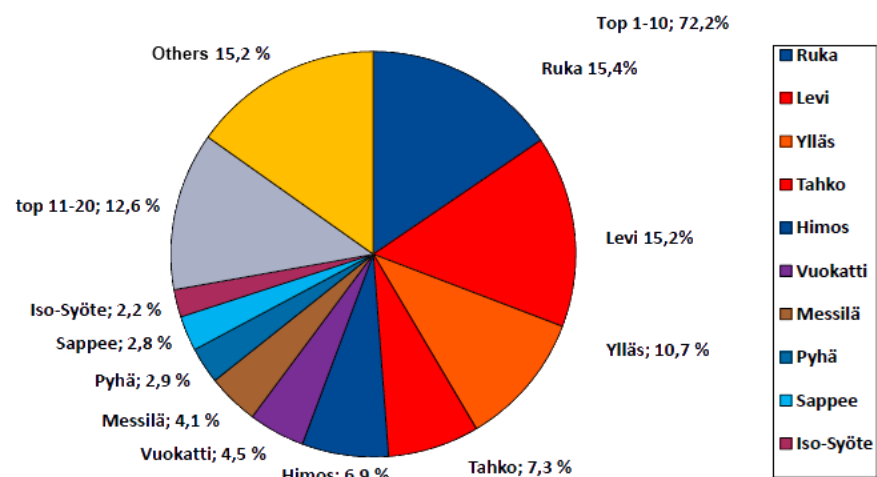


Figure 2 Market share of the top 10 ski resorts in Finland in 2010. (Source: Suomen Hiihtokeskusyhdistys ry 2010)

The following graph shows the monthly accommodation sales by Levin Matkailu in 2009 during the ICIUM season November-April.

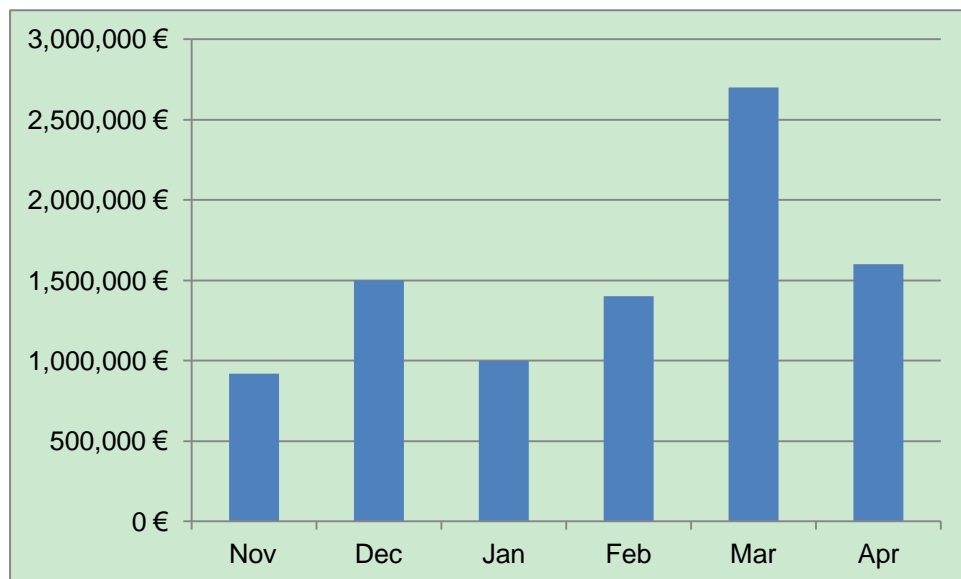


Figure 3 The monthly accommodation sales by Levin Matkailu in 2009 during the ICIUM season November-April.

As the graph points out, Levi has a two peak seasons. In November the accommodation sales are relatively low, and when there is no World Cup, the November figures have been as low as 400 000 €. The first peak is around Christmas. January is quiet, February moderate, while March is the highest peak. Also, April is popular. Sales figures of the end of the season are partly determined by Easter (which can be either in March or in April). In the whole winter season, about 500,000 people visit Levi. (ICIUM handbook, Futuvision internal marterial.)

		People visiting Levi during the ICIUM open time.					
		250 000.	300 000.	350 000.	400 000.	450 000.	500 000.
Percentage visiting ICIUM.	5 %.	12 500.	15 000.	17 500.	20 000.	22 500.	25 000.
	10 %.	25 000.	30 000.	35 000.	40 000.	45 000.	50 000.
	15 %.	37 500.	45 000.	52 500.	60 000.	67 500.	75 000.
	20 %.	50 000.	60 000.	70 000.	80 000.	90 000.	100 000.
	25 %.	62 500.	75 000.	87 500.	100 000.	112 500.	125 000.
	30 %.	75 000.	90 000.	105 000.	120 000.	135 000.	150 000.
	35 %.	87 500.	105 000.	122 500.	140 000.	157 500.	175 000.
	40 %.	100 000.	120 000.	140 000.	160 000.	180 000.	200 000.
	45 %.	112 500.	135 000.	157 500.	180 000.	202 500.	225 000.
	50 %.	125 000.	150 000.	175 000.	200 000.	225 000.	250 000.

Figure 4 Expected number of tourists visiting ICIUM according to the percentage visiting ICIUM.

### 1.4 Reasons for the topic selection

ICIUM-Wonderworld of Ice is a unique global service concept. It is, in a way, innovative since the concept combines the traditional Chinese ice

and snow sculpturing art with modern standard and unified global service concept. Like other successful theme parks worldwide, such as Disney, the business model of such service concept is not fixed and limited. A full service package is able to be provided to the customers. Different from traditional theme parks, new elements of snow and ice are brought in by ICIUM. The breakthrough to the traditional Chinese snow and ice sculpturing art, integrated with Western standardized service concept is offering a great opportunity for future success.

However, in reality, the brand new service concept faces many challenges in service design and development perspectives. Studies and researches are needed in order to fulfill the needs of targeting groups. The study of target market is also crucial which means the service concept has to be designed, developed and modified to adapt to the local markets.

In addition, the author works for the commissioning company for this project. The convenience and easy approaches to useful information provides the author a great chance to view thoroughly about the case.

In conclusion, the interest towards the new and promising subject is the main reason why the author has chosen the topic. In addition, the real work experience helps the author a lot in writing the thesis.

### 1.5 Purpose and objectives

The study is commissioned by Futuvison Technologies Oy, which is the project owner of ICIUM- Wonderworld of Ice. The task is assigned to the author when the first year ICIUM project was finished in summer of 2011. The author was expected to review and analyze the first year ICIUM project thoroughly. Within the process, the author needs to describe, conclude and analyze the project from services quality and marketing efforts point of view. Meanwhile, the author needs to raise problems towards the first year project and list challenges, which need to be taken care for the second year project. Combining researches for theories of tourism service and tourism marketing, the author is expected to come up with a suggestion to improve and develop the service quality and marketing efforts at the same time. In order to achieve the purpose, the study is segmented into four parts; each part has its own objective. When all the four objectives are reached, the outcome associated with those four objectives, will be provided.

Firstly, the theories of tourism services and tourism marketing are introduced, described and analyzed thoroughly in order to give appropriate background for the research. The research of the theories focuses mainly on the analysis of the concepts and the methods to improve the quality and efforts.

Secondly, with the support of Futuvison staff who involves in ICIUM project, the author combines the available resources and own experiences to describe and analyze the past ICIUM season and the current situation from service and marketing point of view.

Thirdly, the author will list and evaluate the challenges for the project from services and marketing point of view based on the project results, author's own experience and the results from customer surveys.

Lastly, a new suggestion on how to develop the global service concept in order to adapt to local market and how to market the tourism service better will be provided. These solutions are suggested based on the researches on both theoretical and empirical perspectives. By successfully offering a practical and targeted solution, the author is expected to help ICIUM-Wonderworld of Ice project improve its service quality and marketing efforts and effectiveness.

### 1.6 Research methods

The research methods for this study can be divided into two categories - the theoretical research and empirical evidence. In theoretical researches, academic knowledge is found and gathered from books and other literatures. Online sources, such as articles and data from local market's official website and organizations' official website, are also used as supplement to literatures. In addition, internal materials from Futuvision Technologies Oy will also be introduced when current situation and challenges are described. For the empirical evidence used to support the theory, is gathered through customer survey conducted at ICIUM site in Levi. In addition, the author's own work experience and observation is introduced to support and supplement the questionnaire.

## 2 THEORY FRAMEWORK

Commissioned by Futuvision Technologies Oy, which owns ICIUM-Wonderworld of Ice service concept, the author aims to find the solutions to improve the services of ICIUM theme park and meanwhile improve the marketing efforts for the service. In order to achieve the objectives, the author believes two different fields of theories are needed for this study. The two different theories seem to be separated. However, when the two theories apply in real tourism business, they are collaborated. In this chapter, the author analyzes the two theories separated, in order to build a suitable theory framework for empirical evidences.

### 2.1 Tourism Service

#### 2.1.1 Nature of tourism industry

In order to examine service quality in leisure and tourism, it is useful to consider the nature of the leisure and tourism industry and, indeed, developments in the leisure and tourism product. The leisure and tourism industry is no different from any other in that the main strategic issue facing all organizations is achieving customer- perceived service quality. (Williams & C. Buswell 2003, 3.)

It is an industry with a major impact on the quality of life of people and communities. It is an industry that invokes passion and emotion in people because of its perceptual nature and its human interaction. It represents both participation and consumption; it can be passive or active, creative or vicarious, educationally and culturally enriching or merely entertaining. (Williams & C. Buswell 2003, 3.)

As it is explained by Williams and Buswell, tourism industry as a service sector, also focuses on how to provide a qualified product to fulfill customers' needs like all other products. In this specific industry, customers are satisfied mentally more than physically. This is also the reason why tourism industry in developed regions is more flourishing than it is in less developed regions.

#### 2.1.2 Consumers, internal and external customers of tourism industry

Generally, consumers in tourism industry are people who directly purchase and then consume a service themselves. There are different types of consumers in tourism industry but most are concerned with purchasing an admission ticket (e.g. to a concert or tourist attraction) or the use of a specific facility (e.g. a badminton court) or bundle of services (e.g. buying a place on a package holiday). Consumers are in a position to make immediate judgments on the quality of the service provided. They will reconsider past experiences when deciding whether to make a further purchase. (Williams&C. Buswell 2003, 26.)

Whilst the term customers can also encompass consumers, customers can be placed into two distinct groups: those that are either internal or external to the organization. Juran (1988a) was the first quality theorist to acknowledge these divisions. (Williams&C. Buswell 2003, 27.)

- External customers

An external customer is a person who purchases services from a provider but who, unlike a consumer, do not necessarily consume them. An example of this phenomenon would be the social secretary of a working men's club who arranges (purchases) day trips on behalf of the membership, or the treasurer of an amateur football team who books (purchases) the use of a football pitch from the local authority for the season. In each scenario, the person may consume the service as well as purchase it but this is not necessarily the case. The lack of consensus as to a generic name for a user of facilities can cause confusion, especially to seasonal and new staff. Excessive labor turnover in tourism and leisure facilities ensures that there are always a high percentage of new employees. The importance of every external customer to the organization can be lost in the 'labeling' and inappropriate service may be delivered. (Williams & C. Buswell 2003, 27.)

- Internal customers

This term acknowledge that people working within an organization can be internal customers of each other. For example, the marketing department of a theatre is the internal customer of the creative director. Marketing requires information about the season's program and the individual cast members so that the department can design the publicity leaflet and have it printed in time for the mail shot company to distribute. The marketing function is also the internal customer of the business director and equally requires the information on pricing structures for each event for the same reason. (Williams & C. Buswell 2003, 27.)

Juran (1988b) considered that 'the first step in quality planning is to identify who are the customers.' Grönroos and Gummesson(1986, cited in Burca,1995) stressed that staff who are not visible to the external customers are still important to the overall quality of service delivery, as their contribution influences the outcome. Whatever label is given to the 'customers', it is necessary to acknowledge their importance to the organization. Their views need to be sought, as their needs and expectations are always changing. (Williams & C. Buswell 2003, 27.)

ICIUM theme park is another good example to examine the above theory of customers' divisions. As a tourism service provider, ICIUM theme park also has three types of customers as it is categorized in the theory described above. Consumers in general are customers (both single and group customers) who buy the admission ticket and visit ICIUM theme park themselves. Those consumers either buy the tickets from the sales point at site or from partner sales points such as hotels and travel agencies. External customers most often are the organizers of some group activities, for example, the HR department of an enterprise booked the ICIUM theme park for a group activity and paid the hourly fees, another example is that teachers from a school reserved ICIUM theme park and paid for the admission tickets for the students. Internal customers in ICIUM case refers to the internal staff working for ICIUM or partly working for ICIUM from

Futuvision Group. For example, the marketing and sales director visited ICIUM and offered some good suggestions, which have significantly improved the service quality of the park. Despite all the three types of customers experience the service from different channels and in different ways, their opinions have to be taken into account. From their opinions, their needs and expectations are also assessed. This helps greatly ICIUM service concept improve the service quality towards different target groups.

### 2.1.3 Service quality

Service quality is a term that describes a comparison of expectations with performance (Lewis and Booms, 1983). A business with high service quality will meet customer needs whilst remaining economically competitive (ASQ, The Global voice of Quality).

A number of writers, including Peters (1987), have suggested that if customers perception of a service is that it is 'excellent' and that it consistently meets their needs, the organization will establish a reputation for 'excellence' (e.g. Ritz Hotel or Disneyland). Peters (1987) described in his seven-step progression (table 1) how an organization could achieve and deliver excellent quality. To investigate these concepts would require a change in organizational culture for many service providers.

1. Quality within natural work group
2. Quality with suppliers
3. Quality field sales/service
4. Cross-functional teams
5. Quality via system improvement
6. Quality as close to the customer
7. Quality as total customer responsiveness

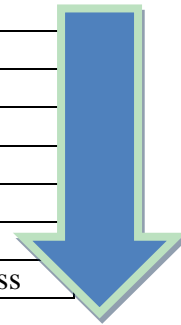


Table 1 Patterns of progression. (Source: Peters, 1987, p.86)

C. Grönroos is one of the founder members of Scandinavian school of service quality. He founded Perceived Service Quality model (later on developed by teachers from the school) which explains how perceived service quality is associated with expectation and experience of service from a customer. In this model, expectations are a function of market communications, image, word of mouth, and consumer needs and learning, whereas experience is a product of a technical and functional quality, which is filtered through the image. (Grönroos' Perceived Service Quality model, webpage)

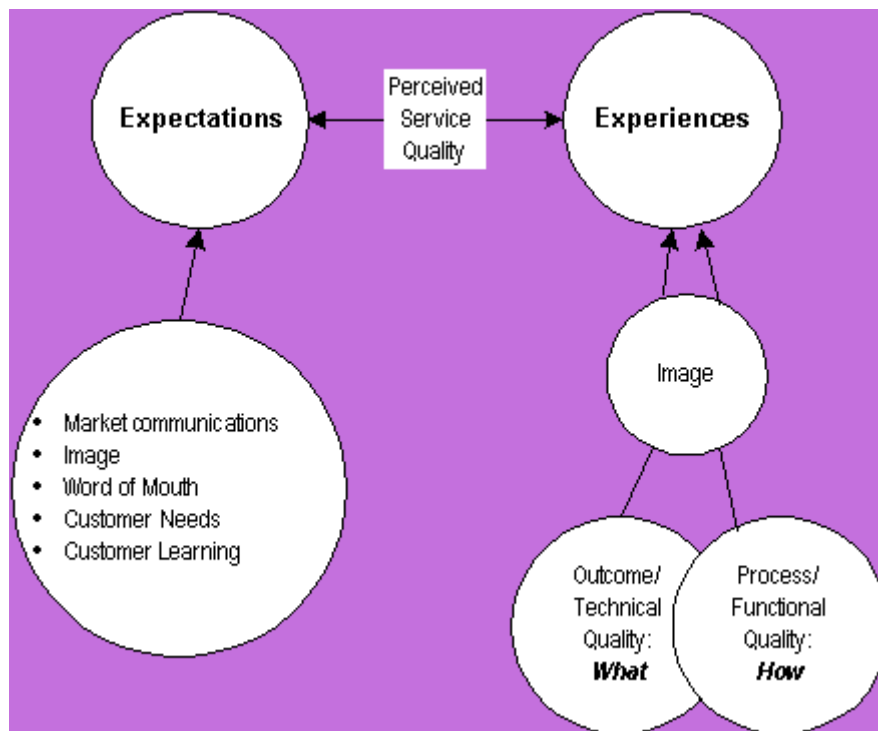


Figure 5 Grönroos' Perceived Service Quality model(Source from internet)

Grönroos more clearly shows the existence of a perception gap, although there is no suggestion of "delighting" only of narrowing the gap. However, the model has a more practical application as it shows factors that contribute to each side of the gap. It demonstrates that the supplier can affect both sides of the gap – most notably by managing customer expectations. In addition, it illustrates that the customer experience is a product of the image of supplier quality, not just the actuality. Clearly marketing as well as process and technical quality has an effect on the perception gap. (Grönroos' Perceived Service Quality model, webpage.)

In advance, Grönroos listed several criteria of good perceived service quality.

- |   |
|---|
| <p>Outcome-related criteria</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Professional and skills</li> </ol> <p>Process-related criteria</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2. Attitude and behavior of contact staff</li> <li>3. Accessibility and flexibility of the service provider</li> <li>4. Reliability and trustworthiness for the best interest of the customer</li> <li>5. Recovery immediately when something goes wrong</li> </ol> <p>Image-related criteria</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>6. Reputation and credibility, value for money and good performance</li> </ol> |
|---|

Table 2 Grönroos's criteria of good perceived service quality. (Adapted from Edvardsson, 1994, p.86, cited in Grönroos, 1990b)

From the other hand, expectation of service quality by staff and customers are generated by culture and prior socialization (Weiermair, 2000) and attempts to enhance service quality may be compounded by cross-cultural service encounters. Tsang and Qu (2000) identify that the less than international standard of service quality in many hotels in China results from



difficulties in finding qualified employees to provide a service to meet the expectations of foreign tourists, coupled with the service attitude problems of employees. Pizam and Ellis (1999) state that customer satisfaction is the major performance indicator of service quality, and emphasizes its cost-effectiveness as a promotional tool, resulting in return visits and word of mouth publicity (Heung, 2000). In analyzing service quality, both employee and customer perceptions must be examined (Randall and Senior, 1996). If employees and customers share the same value, then service quality expectation should be met. Where gaps exist, for cultural and other reasons, procedures need to be in place for employee development and training. Randall and Senior (1996) assert that the concept of satisfaction relates to specific transactions, whereas service quality is more holistic evaluation by customers of their complete experience and overall service quality may be perceived as acceptable, even if one particular transaction was unsatisfactory. The important aspect to consider is the holistic character of the consumer act. The consumer (tourists) judges the total holiday experience, even though tourists experience a multitude of individual service encounters and can also evaluate their inherent qualities (Weiermair, 2000:398). Douglas and Connor (2003:172) emphasizes that the key factor in providing quality is to focus on the customer in delivering the expected service and to ensure that the customer understands that they are empowered to influence service quality – ‘the focus should be not so much provider and recipient as a “partnership” in the overall service experience’. (Jones, Haven & Claire 2005, 5-6.)

This part of theory is extremely crucial and useful for improving the service quality of ICIUM theme park. It can be simply concluded that the quality of tourism service depends on how customers’ needs meet with customers’ expectation. By using Grönroos’ model, the author can assess the current service quality of ICIUM services and examine what the needed improvements are in order to better connect the expectation and experience of customers. In addition, the theory about the gap between the expectation of service provider and customers strongly reminds the author to provide a solution to help each party understand each other better.

### 2.1.4 Customer satisfaction

The customer could judge the quality of the service delivered as ‘good’ but they may not have had satisfaction from the experience (Randall and Senior, 1996). Crompton and Mackay (1989) submitted the premise that satisfaction and service quality is not the same thing, stating that ‘Satisfaction is a psychological outcome emerging from an experience, whereas service quality is concerned with attributes of the service itself. Parasuraman *et al.* (1988) agreed but stated that customers use the same criteria to judge both, as the two are interrelated. Oliver (1997) alluded to the differences in how customers judge service quality and customer satisfaction (table 3). (Williams & C. Buswell 2003, 59-60.)

Service quality	Customer satisfaction
Evaluating using specific clues	Evaluation more holistic
Based on perceptions of 'excellence'	Based on need
Cognitive	Emotional

Table 3 Customer judgment of service quality and customer satisfaction (Oliver, 1997)

One of the original service quality theories is that customers are satisfied when their judgment of the service they have received (perception) equals or exceeds what they expected:

$$\text{Customer satisfaction (CS)} = \text{Perceptions (P)} - \text{Expectations (E)}$$

This is known as the *gap analysis theory* (Zeithaml *et.al.*, 1990) or *Oliver's expectancy- disconfirmation* (Anderson and Fornell, 1994; Oliver, 1997).

Oliver's theory (Oliver and De Sarbo, 1988) has three potential satisfaction levels:

- **Negative disconfirmation** occurs when the service is worse than expected.
- **Positive disconfirmation** occurs when service is better than expected.
- **Simple confirmation** occurs when the service is as was expected. (Williams & C. Buswell 2003, 59-60.)

'Quality in Tourism and Leisure is the experience of knowing you've had a good time (Mossop and Stores, 1991).' The 'good time' experience of some customers could be a mediocre or bad time for others. The component of the tourism and leisure experience that has caused the overall feeling of a bad time may be external to the organization, such as transportation, other customers or members of the customer's own group, or even themselves. The interaction of all or some of these factors can create the perception of a bad experience. Swarbrooke and Horner (1999) noted that gamblers were dissatisfied with the resort of Las Vegas when they did not win. Liljander and Strandvik (1997) commented that emotions play a part in being satisfied but those emotions need not to be all positive. (Williams & C. Buswell 2003, 61.)

Dissatisfaction occurs when customer perceptions of a service do not meet their expectations. There are numerous possible causes but a few of these are:

- Research not being carried out as to what customer needs and wants are;
- External information (e.g. advertising literature) giving false expectations to the customer;
- Staff not given adequate training to deliver the service as specified;
- Financial objectives taking priority, which, at the extreme, lead to unsafe customs and practices (e.g. not closing the bow doors on cross-channel ferries before leaving harbor). (Williams & C. Buswell 2003, 66.)

Research has indicated that in many cases customer dissatisfaction came about because of an organization's failure to address a complaint, rather than the original service problem (Hocutt *et.al.*, 1997). It is therefore imperative to design and instigate service recovery techniques (will be intro-

duced later) to safeguard customer satisfaction. It is interesting to note that when a relationship has developed with an organization, a situation that would normally lead to dissatisfaction may not have that effect. Bolton (1998) suggested that this is due to the accumulative effect of previous encounters that satisfied the customer, which then reduces the impact of an unsatisfactory event. (Williams&C. Buswell 2003, 66.)

Customer satisfaction in Multinational organization is another interesting field to study. Especially for a global service concept like ICIUM- Wonderland of Ice, which is designed, built and managed by a multinational team and attars tourists from both domestic and oversea markets. The transferability of a standardized service across the global reliant on the notion of 'cultural homogenization', that is, the same market segments throughout the world requires the same services. It should be noticed that in practice even standardized products and services are modified to meet the needs of the local community. In fast-food outlets, changes might be made to the amount of seasoning to suit local tastes, or items might even be removed from the menu if the main religion of the country forbids it. Then ban on alcoholic drinks by Disneyland Paris to accommodate the French custom of drinking wine with meals. Another element in the multinational dimension is the fact that tourist attractions and events attract many visitors from overseas. Different nationalities will expect different service standards and if the service provider is not aware of these needs, satisfaction levels will be reduced. This applies to the participants as well as the spectators with these major multinational events. The solutions to all the scenarios is for organizations to carry out research so that they know what their customers want and to be familiar with the general working environment, customs, practices and legislation for each country of operation and each cultural group using or working in the facility. (Williams & C. Buswell 2003, 61-62.)

Although customers of tourism and leisure organizations are making judgments all the time regarding their expectations and perceptions of a service (before purchase, during the delivery and after purchase), managers in the industry must not underestimate the difficulties in converting these judgments into actual operational strategies. (Williams & C. Buswell 2003, 66.)

Through a thorough analysis of customer satisfaction, the author realizes research for customer satisfaction is the key to offer the best service quality. However, the theory is too complex and not mature from the author's point of view. To achieve customers' satisfaction, the expectations before providing service and perceptions during service providing needed to be researched toward different customer groups in a careful way. In addition, within the operational team of ICIUM theme park, a uniformed service standard has to be set in association with the local market's characteristics, domestic and oversea customers' characteristics. After the standard is established for the targeted market, the service team has to receive a serious training about the service standard. To be noticed, the standardized training for receiving customers' complains is also crucial, it is so important as it is stated, 'customer dissatisfaction came about as a result of an organiza-

tion's failure to address a complaint, rather than the original service problem (Hocutt *et.al.*, 1997)'.

### 2.1.5 Service design

Service design includes the translation of ideas, solutions and intentions into a specific configuration or arrangement of equipment, space and other resources, as in a theme park with its complex circulation of people, or an airline with its movement of people. (Williams & C. Buswell 2003, 94.) Service design covers hands-on activities to describe and detail a service, the service system and service delivery process... it is the process of presenting needs in some physical form, initially as a solution, and then as a specific configuration or arrangement of materials, resources, equipment and people. Poor service design would lead to problems with service delivery. (Gummesson 1994, 85.)

Just as quality management should be an integration of service marketing, operations and human resources management, service design should be seen as a total process combining functions and adopting a certain approach. A number of observers have demonstrated how achieving service quality depends on the integrating and unifying function of the service design process (Kingman-Brundage *et al.*, 1995; Stuart and Tax, 1996; Normann, 2000; Titz, 2001). The term 'totally design' is often used to highlight the link between market research, design and development and the operational and marketing functions in the offering of the product or service (Stuart and Tax, 1996; Collier and Meyer, 1998). (Williams & C. Buswell 2003, 95-96.)

Oakland (1993) demonstrated how many successful organizations adopt a market-led approach as opposed to a technology-led approach or marketing-led approach. In other words, it is customer requirements, and the organization's genuine understanding of them and responsiveness to them, that drive the design and delivery of the product or service, rather than the functions of the organization or an overemphasis on the tangible features of the product or service. (Williams & C. Buswell 2003, 96.)

A systematic way for integrating different dimensions of the customer experience has to be identified in order to provide a smooth and seamless service. This is achieved through designing and implementing a service system capable of creating outcomes that customer value and an ethos and culture that staff fully understand and share. This further states how important it is to create a common understanding of customer value, which refers to both what customers get and pay, and a service culture among the staff. (Williams & C. Buswell 2003, 96.)

However, in order to understand and use the dynamics of the service experience, it is also necessary to consider not only the elements of service logic and service concept in the design of service but also the service process and system of delivery (Edvarsson and Olsson, 1996; Ford and Heaton, 2000). The model in figure6 demonstrates the relationship between the various elements in the service design process. It does not offer a tech-

nique or a method for service design but contributes to an understanding of the complex process of designing systems and processes. (Williams&C. Buswell 2003, 96-97.)

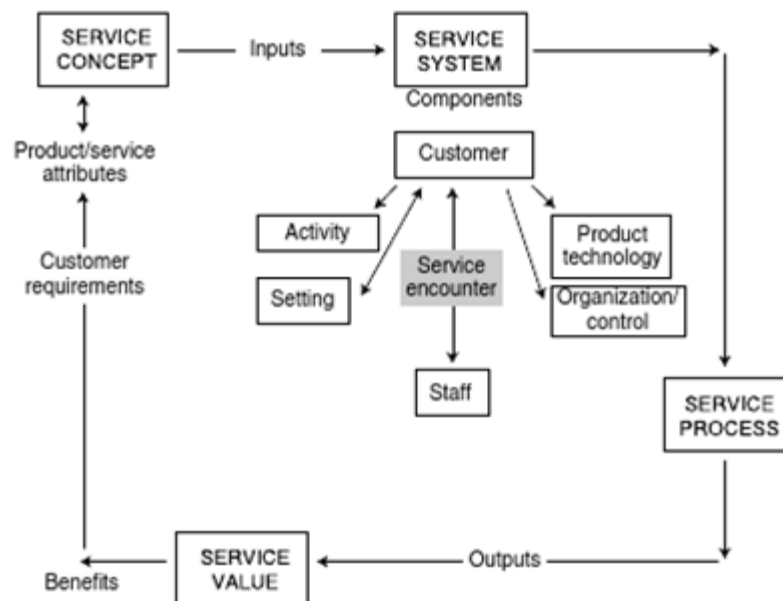


Figure 6 Model of service design and delivery in leisure and tourism.(Williams&C. Buswell, 2003)

The following parts will further illustrate the service design and delivery model above:

**Service concept** in tourism service represents customer needs and the features of the product or transaction. Service concept describes the customers' needs to be satisfied, and how they are satisfied through service package design. The service concept also defines what business the organization is in and how it should promote and organize itself. A good example is David Lloyd Group; their service quality is guaranteed by the distinctive features of service concept. The Group believes that its core product – the activities provided by its sports and leisure facilities- is important but is underpinned by highly trained staff, high standards of cleanliness and maintenance, friendly attentive service and a pleasant and relaxing environment. It is the company's aim to exceed its members' expectations by providing an enhanced service, delighting members and increasing their perceived value of their membership. The aim is also to give all members individual attention and to try to meet every service encounter with care and compassion. The David Lloyd core values are 'caring, passion and trust' and its philosophy on service quality is to offer every member the best combination of quality product, standard of service and value for money in the leisure quality. (Williams & C. Buswell 2003, 97-98.) This example is a very good example for improving the service concept of ICIUM even though the two businesses are different. Caring, passion and trust can also be the value of ICIUM service concept. In the later suggestion chapter, the author will combine the current situation and provide suggestions to adjust the service concept of ICIUM.

**Service system** in leisure and tourism industry establishes what is needed in order to meet the customer requirements and the product features described by the service concept. It refers to the resources and inputs to the service process, and how they are deployed, and it helps to identify the service standards in all aspects of the operation. (Williams & C. Buswell 2003, 98.) In ICIUM case, the service system can refer to the actual ice and snow sculptures, audio system, shop, etc. The service system has several elements:

- **The customer.** Since the aim of the service, the wishes of customers and the nature of the service are closely linked. It is crucial to segment the customers into groups who expect the service quality differently. As a consequence, the service quality will be better provided towards different customer groups. (Williams & C. Buswell 2003, 98.)
- **The activity.** The interaction between the customer and the leisure opportunities provided by the activity embraces many aspects of leisure and tourism management, including programming, the concept of substitutability, opportunity sets in which the two variables of consumer behavior and product attributes interrelate (Stable, 1991) and the spectrum of leisure and tourism opportunities (Williams & C. Buswell 2003, 99). When it comes to the activities in ICIUM, the activities include competition such as ice sliding and children game and other activities, which can well connect customers with the park's elements and help customers better enjoy the service provided by ICIUM.
- **The setting.** The setting refers to the physical and technical environments for the activity and intangible features such as atmosphere and ambience (Williams & C. Buswell 2003, 99). In certain contexts, it is the aim of the service provider to link the service encounter in the consumer's mind with the environment encounter, thus creating repeat business and a long-term relationship (Clarke & Schmidt, 1995). The settings in ICIUM consist of two parts, settings for the ice and snow sculpture exhibition park itself and additional services. As it is stated above, the economical and operational benefits sometimes cause customers' dissatisfaction in the environmental terms. A simple example in ICIUM is the design of entrance gate. ICIUM theme park is basically built up by nature resources of snow and ice, in the first year ICIUM in Levi, the entrance of the park is also built by ice. However, it causes operational problems of ticket selling and ticket reading. This problem is introduced more specifically later in this study.
- **Product technology.** Product technology is concerned with tangibles such as facilities, equipments and technology in the activity itself. It includes buildings such as cinemas and leisure centers, the equipment within them and their use of technology as a feature of the product, such as screen and sound systems in cinemas or white-knuckle rides or simulators in visitor attractions. (Williams & C. Buswell 2003, 99.) In ICIUM, the tangible product technologies include the audio system, the shop, the interior design and decoration in the shop, the lights used for the sculptures and other small product technologies.

- **Staff.** Staff is also a key factor, because of the service encounter in many leisure and tourism contexts, and the interaction in such social settings defines the critical moments of truth. Receptionists, instructors, guides, attendants and waiters are particular front-line staff whose role is to animate, motivate and engage with customers (Williams & C. Buswell 2003, 100). Staffs in ICIUM include receptionists responsible for ticket selling and reading, guides (acted by other staffs), waiter in the shop. The more specific structure of ICIUM staff is introduced later in this study.
- **Organization and control.** Organization and control work concerns the work procedures, documentation of the procedures and communication with customers. These elements are crucial to service quality and can help shape customers' attitudes towards the quality of the service. It includes ticket purchase, automatic entry, signage and sight lines, booking systems and the technology concerned with underpinning the delivery of the product. (Williams & C. Buswell 2003, 100.) The organization and control in ICIUM is divided into two parts, management at site and ICIUM management team in Tampere office. The responsibilities are divided; these are introduced more detailed later in this study. As a fact and the author's own experience, this part is one of the determining elements to influence the balance sheet of the business.

**Service process** is the chain of activities and stages the customer goes through; it involves much interaction between the customer and the other inputs that make up the service system. It refers to functional quality (the how) as opposed to technical quality (the what) and, in many contexts, is more important in determining the overall quality of the consumer experience. The service process involves the variables of value, job tasks and the job environment as created by the core logic and the three interfaces between service delivery by staff and customer perceptions of the service received. These three interfaces are described as:

- The **encounter interface**, which links customer and employee logic through the values of the organization and the job environment, particularly with the significance of interpersonal relationships in high-contact services such as health and fitness and hospitality.
- The **technical interface**, which links customer and technical logic through value and work tasks and the customer's direct contact with technology and systems (important aspects are booking systems and the technology in visitor attraction sites).
- The **support interface**, which links employee and technical logic through work tasks and the relationships between front-line and back-stage staff. (Williams&C. Buswell 2003, 100-101.)

**Service value** does not simply relate to the concept of value for money but also accounts for other variable such as cost, time (including travelling) and the general effort required for the activity. (Williams & C. Buswell 2003, 101.)

The design and delivery of service business is very complex. This model of service design and delivery is a good tool for the author to break down the service process and analyze each step within the loop. It tells in detail how the service is designed and delivered to the customers from the beginning to the end. The author will use this model to describe the current ICIUM service model, and the purpose is to improve the model from each perspective.

### 2.1.6 Tools of Service Design

In Figure 6, the model of service design and delivery explains the process how the concept of service is translated into a manageable process with specific aims. It highlights how the service delivery system is controlled and managed. There are different tools or methods which describe the processes involved and the way in which an understanding of those processes can enhance the management of the leisure and tourists experience and help managers to cope with the challenges that service characteristics such as intangible provide. (Williams & C. Buswell 2003, 108.)

There are several tools of service design. Among the tools, **Service blueprints** is a more complex approach matches the consumer process with the service system and demonstrates the interaction that take places. It shows how a service map or blueprint depicts a consumer process and its relationship with the service process. The map embraces the management function and intent at the bottom and how it relates to the requirements of customers who enter the map at the top. (Williams&C. Buswell 2003, 109.)

Service blueprint demonstrates in a number of stages how management defines the service concept, allocates resources and coordinates the functions within the operation to implement the service concept:

- Management defines or refines service concept.
- Management allocates resources – to what extent is the decision driven by a customer focus?
- Management coordinates functions. Where everybody understands the service logic, this becomes a smooth, cohesive operation.
- Marketing develops advertising and sales promotion. An understanding of the service concept and how it can be communicated successfully to customers also depends on a fully integrated approach.
- Response by customers. Much will depend on initial perceptions and the skill and understanding of staff in dealing with customers.
- Front-line personnel greet customers. The service encounter, whether as a prelude to the core activity or as part of the core activity (with a fitness instructor, tour guide or waiter), defines many ‘moments of truth’. Its effectiveness will often be determined by the fit between customer logic (the customer’s needs and motives), technical logic (how the service outcomes are produced and why) and employee logic (what the employee is trying to do and why).
- Shall I buy? The value the customer attaches to the expectations of the service is particularly important at this stage.



- Special requests. The extent to which service system have flexibility built into them will always be tested here.
- The service is produced. The test of any operation is how seamlessly this process is carried out. Many have witnessed operations in restaurants, airports, or holiday companies where the lack of cooperation and understanding between personnel in different functions was marked and resulted in a service break down.
- Customer experience the service outcome. This, of course, is often as the outcomes are produced and is one of the biggest tests of the efficacy of the service design.
- The remaining stages are concerned with evaluation and feedback and provide the link between service design and a total quality approach based on continuous improvement. (Williams & C. Buswell 2003, 109-110.)

Answering these questions can help the author to have a better view on technical and functional aspects of service quality. Service blueprinting considers the structure and how the service is processing in the structure. Service blueprints also help to illustrate the model of service delivery and the interaction between its various components and enable the design and implementation of the service package and delivery system to be much more informed and appropriate. The following figure gives an example how this service design tool is applied in a health club. (Williams&C. Buswell 2003, 110-111.)

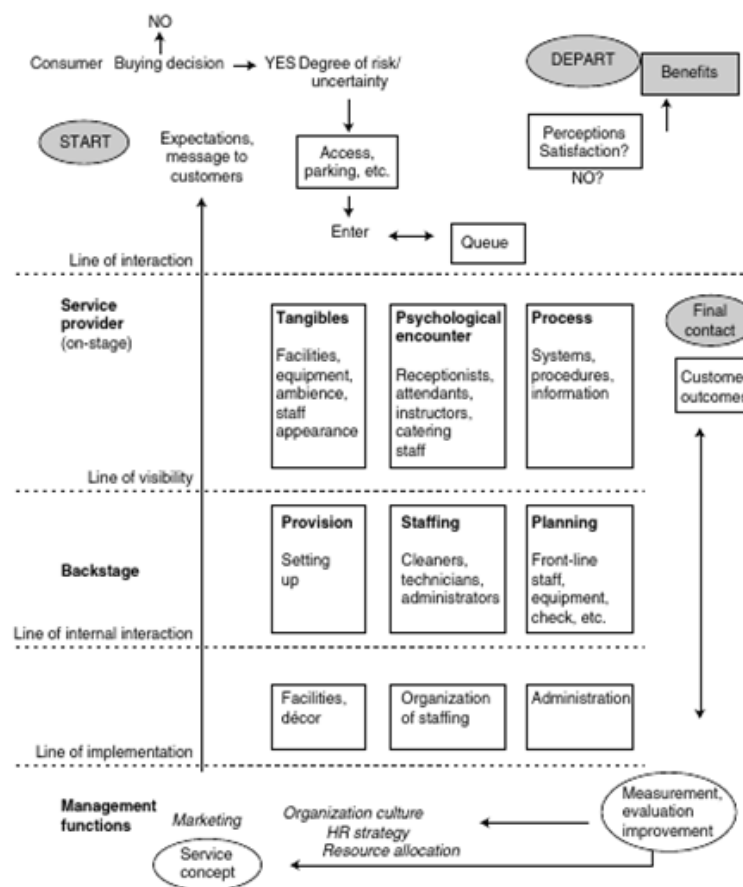


Figure 7 Service blueprinting of a health club (Williams&C. Buswell 2003, 111.)

The map from bottom to top through several lines of demarcation reveals the nature and clarity of the service logic and the structure of backstage and support functions in the organization. The line of visibility separates the front-line or on-stage operations from the backstage functions. On-stage duties are those that are visible to the public. Backstage duties are performed by contact staff but away from public gaze. In ICIUM case, backstage duty may include tour guides being trained for the substance and delivery of material. Both on-stage and backstage operations are supported by other functions and these are separated by the line of internal interactions and emphasize the importance of the quality chain and the concept of the internal customer. As a good case study for ICIUM theme park, Disney theme parks are noted for their costumed characters and the friendliness and knowledge of other on-stage staff. Yet they are dependent on thousands of support staff who supplies the costumes (the largest theatrical wardrobes in the world) and uniforms, train staff in the 'Disney University', service the rides or supply the shops, restaurants and bars. This line, in particular, demonstrates the importance of understanding the 'wider picture' incorporating the service concept and the service logic of the organization. Finally, the line of implementation separates the on-stage, backstage and support functions from the planning and organizing functions of management and the policymaking and decision making this requires. (Williams&C. Buswell 2003, 110-111.)

It follows that service blueprints can be used to design new services, to evaluate and modify existing ones and to control and manage service delivery. They help to communicate the values and nature of the service concept to everybody in the organization. They connect employees with each other as well as with the external customer; they help different departments or functions to understand the notion of the internal customer. They represent, in particular, the unified or integrated approach so critical to the achievement of service quality and enhance the provision and management of service encounters and are an important stage in the process of operationalizing dimensions of quality in specific contexts. (Williams & C. Buswell 2003, 111-112.)

Later in this study, this model will be used to describe the current service design of ICIUM theme park. The author will evaluate the model applied to ICIUM, find out challenges and try to find solutions to improve service quality of ICIUM theme park.

## 2.2 Tourism Marketing

### 2.2.1 Marketing of tourism in brief

Marketing involves product or service development, placement (location and distribution) and pricing. It also requires information about people, especially those interested in what you have to offer ('your market'), such as what they like, where they buy and how much they spend. The goal of marketing is to deliver the right product or service to the right market or

audience. Marketing is the process of planning and executing the conception, pricing, promotion, and distribution of ideas, goods, and services to create exchanges that satisfy individual and organizational objectives (American Marketing Association). As tourism industry was introduced and explained earlier in this study, tourism services are intangible products. Thus the quality control in tourism service is difficult but crucial. It also makes it more difficult for potential customers to evaluate and compare service offerings. In addition, instead of moving the product to the customer, the customer must travel to the product (area/ community). (Ruju & G.P. 2009, 3-4)

### 2.2.2 The Marketing plan

Marketing plan is a good tool for improving efficiencies and effectiveness of one's marketing efforts. This plan will guide their marketing decisions and assist them in allocating marketing resources such as money and personnel time. The plan should include:

- The overall business objectives – what you want to accomplish;
- An assessment of the market environment – what factors may affect your marketing efforts;
- A business/ community profile – what resources are available;
- Market identification (segmentation) – the specific groups or clientele most interested in your product;
- The marketing objectives for each segment;
- The marketing strategies (or mixes) for different markets you target- the best combination of 4Ps (product, price, place and promotion) for each segment;
- An implementation plan – how to 'make it works';
- The marketing budget- how much you have to spend; and
- A method for evaluation and change. (Ruju & G.P. 2009, 4-5)

Later in this chapter, the author will use Raju and G.P.'s theory to define those elements in the framework. This is a good framework to examine and improve the current marketing efficiency for ICIUM service concept. Under this framework, the author is able to assess various perspectives in the current marketing strategy; the author will then come up with challenges for ICIUM. Based on empirical experience and theories, suggestions to the challenges will be given by the author, which is the final goal of this study. However, not all the elements above will be analyzed or used in this study. The reason is that from the author's point of view, some of the elements are less important or which ICIUM has no problems with. Another reason is that some of elements in a marketing plan include confidential information such as budgeting. Thus in this study, some elements in a marketing plan will be ignored and only important parts will be used to support ICIUM's marketing strategy.

### 2.2.3 Market environment analysis

The market environment is divided into micro and macro environments. According to Raju and G.P., the factors in both environments include:

- Demographic and lifestyle trends  
Changes in demographics and lifestyles have a big impact on tourism participation. Some of the important trends are listed as following:
  - 1) Population growth and movement;
  - 2) Rural community growth compared to metropolitan areas;
  - 3) Number of adult women employed outside the home;
  - 4) The number of households is growing, especially non family and single parent households, but family size is decreasing;
  - 5) The impact of two wage earner households on real family income;
  - 6) The number of retired persons with the financial ability to travel;
  - 7) Better health to an old age;
  - 8) Continued aging of the population. (Ruju & G.P. 2009, 6.)
- Economic conditions  
Economic conditions have significant impacts on tourism markets as well. Business should assess the possible impacting factors such as unemployment rates, real family income, rate of inflation, credit availability, and terms and interest rates. (Ruju & G.P. 2009, 6)
- Technology  
The development of technologies has helped tourism business reduce costs and improve the service quality. In addition to service quality, the marketing and sales costs are also much reduced. For instance, on-line sales system or electronic sales equipment has helped business reduce the cost of sales personnel. (Ruju & G.P. 2009, 7)
- Competition  
Business and communities must identify and analyze existing and potential competitors (Ruju & G.P. 2009, 7). In a marketing plan, with the help of competitor analysis, the management can identify the strength and weakness of different competitors. The aim is to build up the business's own strength and to reduce the potential weakness as much as possible. The elements of competitors which need investigation include service features, service quality, demographic location in the market, promotional messages, prices of the service and targeting customers. (Ruju & G.P. 2009, 8.)

### 2.2.4 Market Segmentation (Identification)

Market segmentation or market identification is crucial to a service business. Service product customers are often expecting differently from the service. For example, a kid in ICIUM theme park loves the slide but ignores the beautiful ice building; but the preference of an old lady is totally converse. It is difficult, and risky, to develop marketing strategies for the mass market and strategies designed for the 'average' customer often result in unappealing products, prices, and promotional messages (Ruju & G.P. 2009, 9).

There is no unique or best way to segment markets, but ways in which customers can be grouped are location of residence, demographics, important product and lifestyle attributes (Ruju & G.P. 2009, 9).

### 2.2.5 Marketing strategy (Mix)

The marketing strategy or mix is a method to design and set the uniqueness of a product or service. The marketing mixes in tourism industry should be developed both externally and internally (Ruju & G.P. 2009, 11-12). In this study, the author will focus on the external mix. The external marketing mix includes the 4Ps, which are product/service, price, place, and promotion. The following contents will describe further for the 4Ps. In order to give a close look into marketing mix of theme parks in particular, the author of the study will also use theories for theme parks in particular.

- **Product.** The product in theme park industry includes the park's material characteristics, the service, the image, the brand, the positioning, the benefits it offers its visitors, the quality of the management systems and the guarantees and after-sales services (A. Clave & Salvador. 2007, 412). As a successful product, particularly service of theme park should include a unique service concept, on-site attractions, high-quality environment or atmosphere and innovative ideas. Consumers want totally immersive, realistic, intense, personalized, convenient, and diverse services (Lounsberry, 2004).
- **Price.** Correctly defining a theme park's pricing policy is fundamental from the point of view of the business (Guyomard, 2005). It is complex to set the price of a theme park in a competing market. According to A. Clave and Salvador, there are four basic issues to be taken into consideration when setting prices in parks:
  - 1) The rates of penetration in the market areas should be defined. Since penetration rates are difficult to rise when the supply situation is mature in the market.
  - 2) The budget of different segmented customers should be calculated and assessed because customers in different segmented groups have different attitudes towards the prices. It is important to balance the purchasing power and set an acceptable price for the major customers.
  - 3) The prices set by the competitors should also be assessed. A thorough analysis is needed to evaluate the characteristics, pricing structures and profitability of competitors' prices.
  - 4) Customers' susceptibility to establish a relationship between the price of the service and the utilities satisfied during the period of use and consumption in the park. These utilities vary in accordance with each customer, although demand segments may be established. (A. Clave & Salvador. 2007, 413-414.)

For a theme park, it is difficult to offer different prices to different demanding customers. Hence theme park businesses have developed a variety of promotional tools, ranging from the setting of a standard ta-

riff to discounts and concessions. Discounts are normally used to attract visitors during the low season or to attract specific demand segments like families, groups or repeaters. Concessions are reductions in the standard price which are carried out by attending to social objectives. It is common, for example, for there to exist special tariffs for the elderly or disadvantaged segments. (A. Clave & Salvador. 2007, 414.) For theme park in size of ICIUM, the price package can also be the use of advanced-purchase methods, such as the acquisition of tickets through Internet.

- **Promotion.** To the extent that visitors cannot inspect a theme park before purchasing ticket, the use of promotion and communication instrument is basis to attract customer (A. Clave & Salvador. 2007, 415). Theme parks use common techniques such as advertising, brochures, press and public relations, sponsorship, or the use of the Internet, among other methods (Diamond and Smith, 2000). Complementarily, despite not forming part of the traditional functions of marketing, for the case of theme parks, it is fundamental to create merchandise and concessions as an effective method for extending the brand of the park. This includes souvenirs, consumables, novelties such as unique items to be displayed or used after leaving the park and participatory (items that enhance the customer's experience). (A. Clave & Salvador. 2007, 415.)

For theme parks, there are quite a lot of media channels or tools for promotion, including print media, electronic media, outdoor advertising, flyers, product placement, transit advertising, specialties such as T-shirts, calendars or other printed items and unconventional advertising such as bus display ads or banners (A. Clave & Salvador. 2007, 415-416). In general, medium-sized and small parks tend to be present only in the media through paid advertisements in the local, regional or specialized press instead of expensive and wide national covers. Radio is less used, however in the case of ICIUM, radio is also used. For all the media channels or tools mentioned above, the design is one of the key factors to place a successful promotion. Of course the selected time and location is also determining how customers are reached and what efforts the promotion is likely to bring. For a medium or small sized park like ICIUM, it is important that the promotional channels or tools are implemented towards particular geographical area segmented in the marketing strategy. Different brochures should be designed and produced for different purposes. The purpose of the brochures should always focus on how to grab the targeting customers' attention and the information provided should be offered according to the analysis of the needs from customers. Strategically, parks use other promotional tools, such as the following:

- 1) Free coverage in the media through press and public relations. For this, parks need to provide the media with information content of interest in the form of press releases.
- 2) Direct marketing strategies for dealing with each different market segment (Lafuste, 1998).

- 3) Sponsorship of events, people or organizations. It is basic for them to be present at sports and/or media events such as the Tour de France and to give support to people and organizations that are coherent with the characteristics of the product. Thus, parks with animals, like SeaWorld, often sponsor environmental protection groups and activities.
  - 4) Agreements between parks to run joint advertising campaigns (Fyall, 2003).
  - 5) Finally, as will be seen in a specific section, the Internet has become a key tool for promotion. Parks take advantage of the growing tendency for consumers to perform extensive holiday and travel planning and research via the Internet and to compare products and features. (A. Clave & Salvador. 2007, 415-416.)
- **Place.** In general, place refers to the channels how the customer has the opportunity to purchase the product. In the case of theme parks, the channel is simple and unique since customers can only reach the service by arriving at the site by themselves. Nevertheless, distribution channels do exist, for example, tour operators put together parks and package holidays, acting as intermediaries. (A. Clave & Salvador. 2007, 417.)

#### 2.2.6 Conclusion

Marketing is the method to reach potential visitors. It is vital part of tourism management and can be done effectively and well, with sophistication and tact. This part of the theories gives the author of this study a full picture of how a marketing strategy should be applied in the service concept like ICIUM- Wonderland of Ice. It helps the author to evaluate the existing marketing plan of ICIUM by comparing it with theories and reality. By finding the difference between the existing marketing plan and what is described in the theory, the author will have the opportunity to find out the real challenges and reasons for the existing problems. In next chapter, the author will start to describe and evaluate ICIUM service concept thoroughly based on the structure provided in the theories.

### 3 DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS OF ICIUM THEME PARK

In this chapter, based on the theoretical part which is described earlier in this study and the author's own empirical experience, the author will introduce, describe and analyze the past ICIUM season from both service concept and marketing point of view. The purpose of this chapter in this study is to draw a full picture of ICIUM theme park so that later in this study, the author will have a chance to find out the problems and eventually provide solutions to those problems.

According to the theoretical part of this study, it is figured out that a service concept particularly a theme park in this case has the chance to success if both service and marketing perspectives are taken into consideration. The author will use the theoretical framework to describe and analysis the two important elements of ICIUM theme park. Certainly in reality, not all the theories can be applied in real case. Thus, the author will focus mainly on the case itself in order to give a logical thinking.

#### 3.1 Who are the customers

To specify, the customers in general can be divided into consumers (who direct consume the service, which means the tourists who enter the park by purchasing an entrance ticket) and customers. According to Juran(1988a), the customers can be also segmented into external customer and internal customer. For ICIUM theme park, the customers can be described as follow:

- Consumers  
The consumers for ICIUM theme park are mainly tourists who visit Levi Ski Resort and nearby area both from domestic market and over-sea market. In a survey conducted in ICIUM season 2010-2011, almost half of the domestic customers are from Lapland region. Among the foreign consumers, they mainly come from Russia, Britain and other European countries. Around 70% of the consumers are families. The survey and more detailed information will be provided later in this study.
- External customers  
External customers are those customers who purchase the service (entrance tickets for ICIUM) but do not consumer it by them own. In order to attract these customers, ICIUM theme park has a group sales strategy which targets the group customers and provides the group customers a discounted price.
- Internal customers  
Internal customers refer to the staff that are working for or involving in ICIUM theme park from Futuvision Group which is the project holder of ICIUM- Wonderland of Ice. During the season, for different reasons, staff from almost all departments including administration, finance, IT, marketing and editorial departments in Futuvision has visited the park. Many valuable comments concerning the improvement of service quality has been given, such as the method to improve the technology of maintaining the park.



### 3.2 The service concept and service quality of ICIUM

The service concept describes what service is provided to the customers. For ICIUM theme park, the description of the service concept covers the background information, the principle of the design and the introduction of the mascots which is the theme of the park. The service quality is the element to assess how the service is delivered to the customers. According to Peters (1997), an organization can achieve and deliver excellent quality if it takes care of every aspect in the business. Thus, in ICIUM case, the whole procedure including how ICIUM is built, the relationships with all the partners and suppliers, and the personnel structure of ICIUM theme park are all described specifically in this chapter. By offering a clear map, the author will have the chance to point out the challenges systematically later in the study.

#### 3.2.1 The service concept

The ICIUM concept is a unique winter entertainment and experience concept developed by Futuvision Technologies Oy. Every year a new ICIUM Wonderworld of Ice is created in Levi by China's most talented ice sculptors. ICIUM offers experiences, adventures and togetherness for families as well as businesses and business clients. This one-of-a-kind combination of the magic of Lapland with Chinese mystique brings novelty value and international media attention to the whole of Lapland. (Internal material from Futuvision)

The design of the theme of the park follows the synopsis of MingMing panda's adventures. As the mascots of ICIUM service concept, Mingming panda and Nina reindeer are central figures of ICIUM Wonderworld of Ice. In ICIUM theme park, you will quickly realize that the park is full of the elements of the mascots. You will feel that you are experiencing the adventure with the mascots when you are visiting the park.

This is how the adventures of Mingming panda start:

Once upon a time, in a wonderful place called Bamboo Fairyland, lived Mingming, his grandmother and their animal friends. Their peaceful and idyllic existence was shattered one day when the evil fire-dragon came and destroyed Bamboo Fairyland. Mingming's grandmother Fangfang managed to hide him and told him to find the magic wishing crystals by going through a hidden tunnel. Mingming set off on his journey, fell asleep in the tunnel and woke up to find himself in a log cabin in Ice Crystal Valley, Lapland. He befriends Grandpa Reindeer Niila and young reindeer Nina, who help him find the magic wishing crystals. With the help of Santa Claus and his reindeer, Mingming was able to restore Bamboo Fairyland to the way it was. (Internal material from Futuvision)

MingMing's full story can be read in the book 'Panda's adventures in the Ice Crystal Valley of Lapland', which is published by Futuvision Group. In order to get new ideas for the next adventures of Mingming panda, Futuvision also organizes writing competition for the public. To spread the

story of MingMing's adventure, in addition to the books, there are also soft toys available for the public.



Figure 8 Merchandise for ICIUM service concept (Futuvision Internal material)

### 3.2.2 Building of ICIUM theme park

Since the building technology is confidential to the public, here in the chapter, the author will only simply introduce how the park is built from technique point of view. Building phase will take 1 month for 50-60 workers. During the building phase, 2-3 interpreters are needed, as well as a project manager, a sales manager and one additional person on behalf of Futuvision. The building phase can be started in the Gondola area after the Levi Alpine Skiing World Cup. It will take few days to clean the area from the World Cup equipment, but work can be started immediately after there is enough space to bring in the snow. The building process starts by making the plywood molds for large snow buildings. When the site is available, 1-2 office cabins are needed to act as an office, warehouse and a warming place for the workers. Levi Ski Resort provides the snow blowers for ICIUM already in mid-November and heavy equipments are rented by Futuvision to bring in the snow to the site. It is estimated that about 500 machine hours are needed during the 1-month construction period. During normal weather conditions, ice can be cut in Levi already in mid-November. Ice can also be bought from a local supplier, but the cost is much higher. The building of the park and the transportation of the raw materials proceed simultaneously. During the late construction period, the lights and the sound system are installed. (Internal material from Futuvision)

### 3.2.3 ICIUM partners and suppliers

ICIUM contract partners include:

- Levin Matkailu Oy / Levi Travel Ltd. Levin Matkailu Oy is a contract party with Futuvision, responsible of organizing marketing in Levi area and facilitating the operations on-site.
- Levi Ski Resort Oy Ltd. Ski Resort Oy Ltd is another contract party with Futuvision, responsible of the land area and infrastructure given to ICIUM project.

- Beijing Guoyi Yuyuan Folk Culture Communications Co., Ltd. Futu-vision has signed a contract in China with the Chinese company that is responsible of building, maintaining and dismantling the park.

ICIUM is open for partnership between Futu-vision and relevant commercial and governmental actors. The message for partners is that ICIUM Wonderworld of Ice is a marketing platform that really stands out from the rest. ICIUM is found nowhere else in the world than in Levi, and this guarantees a brand building opportunity offering international media attention and continuous national media coverage. The ICIUM concept suits well for engaging in a long-term cooperation, ranging from sponsored ice sculpts in the ICIUM to different kinds of marketing campaigns. It is also possible to organize impressive one-off events such as customer or dealer conferences or other kind of company events. During the season 2010-2011 the main focus was on sponsored ice sculptures, with added value through visibility for the sponsors in print materials and internet sites. The official sponsors of ICIUM season 2010-2011 include S-group, Mandatum life, Carlsberg, etc. (Internal material from Futu-vision)

There are quite many suppliers for ICIUM. In order to hide confidential information, the name of these suppliers will not be given in this study. They supply ICIUM mainly for water, electricity, raw materials, tools, marketing materials and other related sources.

### 3.2.4 ICIUM project organization

The ICIUM project organization consists of two teams, the 'Finland team' and the 'China team'. Both teams have a named project director. The Finland team is also divided into the site personnel and the personnel supporting the project from the company headquarters. The members are listed as below; the names are not mentioned in this study:

FINLAND team, company headquarters:

- Managing director, project director in Finland
- Director of marketing and sales
- Project head coordinator
- COO, senior advisor
- Communication manager Finland/China.
- 

FINLAND team, ICIUM site:

- Project manager
- Sales manager
- Project assistant
- Other project assistants when needed
- Sales persons.

CHINA team, here it refers to the employees brought by the partner from China:

- Management
- Head designer

- Team leaders
- Ice sculptors
- Ice and snow builders
- Electricians
- Workmen
- Drivers
- Interpreters
- Cooks and other support staff.

All of these personnel are needed in the construction phase since it is a multifaceted process. It is also much cheaper to use low skill workforce for the simpler tasks, whereas actual sculpting requires ice-sculpting professionals. (Internal material from Futuvision)

### 3.3 Customer Satisfaction

The *gap analysis theory* (Zeithaml *et.al*, 1990) or *Oliver's expectancy-disconfirmation* (Anderson and Fornell, 1994; Oliver, 1997) states that the customers are satisfied if the experience equals or exceeds expectation of the service. For customers of ICIUM, the key to influence their expectation is the service concept, which is delivered to the public by different promotion means. The service concept and expected quality has been described above already, the next step is to assess customers' real experience during the delivery of the service. The following chapters will describe the current service design and process. By finding out the gaps between the expectation and experience from customer, the author is able to point out the potential problems and eventually suggest solutions to minimize the gap in order to satisfy the customers better.

### 3.4 The design and delivery of ICIUM service

In this chapter, the service design and delivery model made by Williams&C. Buswell (2003.) will be used to describe the service of ICIUM.

As it has been explained before, the service concept of ICIUM can be simplified as that ICIUM is a theme park, which is made from ice and snow and combines the magic of Lapland with Chinese mystique, the theme of the park follows the synopsis of MingMing panda's adventures. The concept of the service shows what ICIUM wants to deliver to the customers, such as ice and snow sculptures, Lappish and Chinese culture and the story of MingMing's adventure in this land. However, what has ICIUM delivered to the customers compared to the promises? The following layout of the park and the list of sculptures could give an answer.

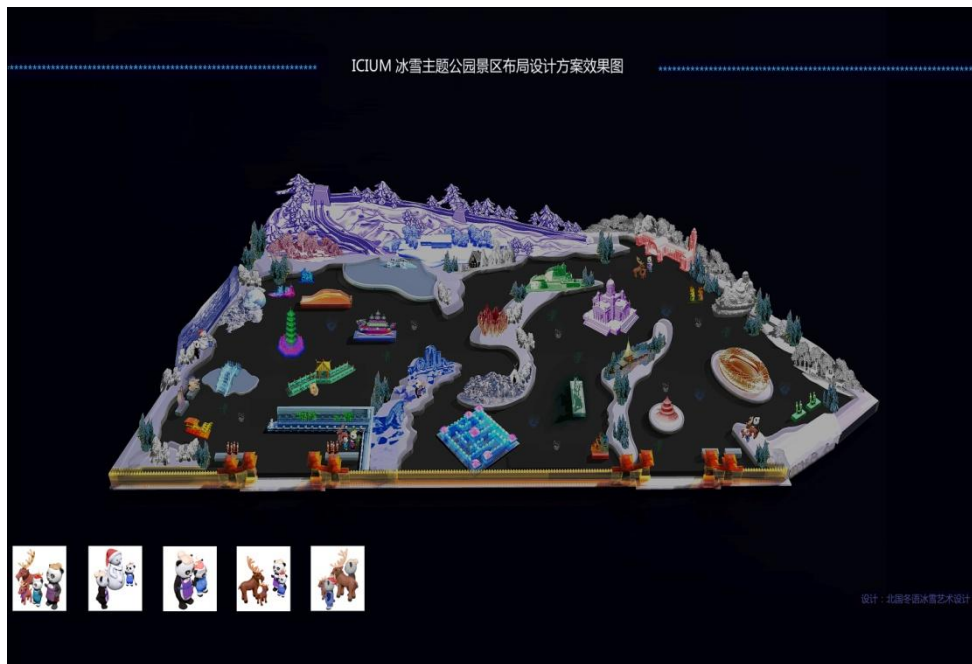


Figure 9 The 3D layout of ICIUM theme park, season 2010-2011 (image from Futuvision Internal material)

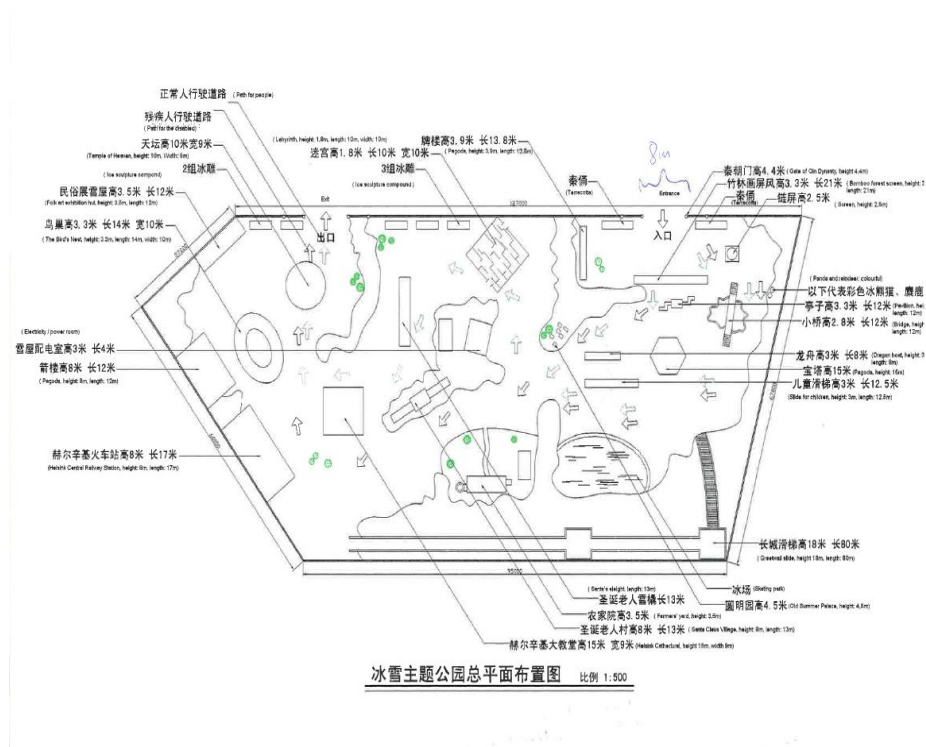


Figure 10 The graphic design of ICIUM theme park, season 2010-2011 (internal material from Futuvision)

Chinese cultural elements	Finnish cultural elements	The story of MingMing's adventure	Others
Gate of Qin Dynasty	Santa's sledge	Bamboo forest screen	Slide for children
Terracotta war-	Santa Claus's	Mascots	Folk art ex-

rior	Village	welcoming tourists	hibition hut
Chinese traditional pavilion	Helsinki Cathedral	MingMing and FangFang with the snowman	
Chinese Traditional bridge	Helsinki Rail- way Station	MingMing meet with Nila and Nina for the first ime	
Dragon boat		Ming Ming ski with Nina	
Pagoda		Nila and Nina farewell to MingMing	
Chinese traditional archway		Labyrinth	
Great Wall slide			
The Summer Pa- lace			
Chinese farmers' yard			
The Bird's Nest			
Temple of Heaven			

Table 4 The list of sculptures in ICIUM theme park, season 2010-2011

As it shows in the layout, the park is segmented into parts by sculptures. The reason is that the designer of the park wants to design a visiting path for the customers to help them understand and enjoy the story of MingMing's adventure which is the theme of the whole park. Because of this designed segmentation, the ambience sound areas are designed and equipped according to the theme of each segment. Figure 11 can help illustrate what the ambience areas are. The area in purple is where the story starts when MingMing lives peacefully in the bamboo fairyland. The music is composed as happy and active. The area in pink is where the big Great Wall slide is, it is the most exciting sculpture in the park so that the park should guarantee that the customers are able to listen to exciting music when they are enjoying the sliding game. The area in green is where the labyrinth is located; the music here should highlight the mystical atmosphere. The Finnish buildings are located in the area of yellow, the calm and peaceful characteristics of Finland should be presented in this area. Lastly, in the story, after MingMing comes back to the fairyland and beat the evil dragon, he built up the new fairyland, which was destroyed by the evil dragon. The area in red represents the new fairyland, so the music should also represent the prosperous and the brand new land.

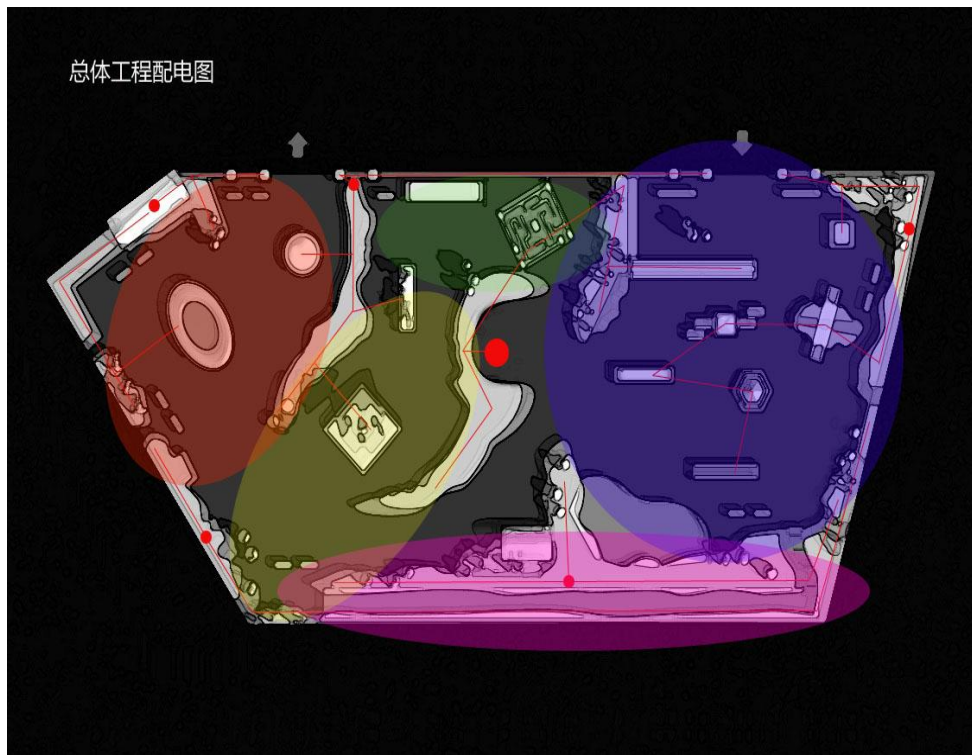


Figure 11 Ambience sound areas, ICIUM theme park, season 2010-2011 (Futuvision internal material)

This layout also tells what activities are offered to the customers. Obviously the major activity is for the customers to view the sculptures by following the development of MingMing's story, with the beautiful music. In addition to the major activity, the customers also have the possibilities to have fun in the slides, in the labyrinth and to purchase in the folk art exhibition hut where Chinese folk arts merchandises and ICIUM merchandises are sold.

The staff and organization of ICIUM can be divided into two parts. Since the organization and staff in Tampere are mainly responsible for marketing and more senior management issues, in this part only the organization and work process at ICIUM site will be introduced. The work process can also be divided into two sections, the daily running of the business and maintenance of the park.

- The maintenance of work includes daily works such as taking the snow away from the ground (by both staff and heavy machine), taking the snow away from the sculptures (using snow blowers by the staff) etc. and emergency work such as repairing the sculptures (by ice sculptors), checking the electricity and lights (by electrician) etc. In general, the daily maintenance work is done by all the staff in planned work shifts, and emergency work is done by professionals only when problems occur.
- The daily running of the business is much more complex to describe than the maintenance work. Thus, the service blueprint introduced in the theory part is a good tool to illustrate the work process. At the



starting stage, when the customers have arrived at the site, from the parking lot or the bus stop, they can immediately see the ticket sales booth and entrance gate of the park. One sales person sits in the booth and sells the entrance tickets to the customers. Customers can directly enter the gate of park which is 20 meters away from the ticket booth with their entrance ticket. Before they are allowed to enter, their tickets will be read and checked by one employee standing in front of the gate. After the entrance, the on-stage service providers are staffs who sell in the folk art exhibition hut, staff who gives guidance service to the customers and staff who dresses in mascot suits (sometimes). Lastly, in the back stage, there are staffs managing the operation, planning the shifts, controlling finances, coordinating within the cross-culture team and technicians such as sculptors and electrician who also supports the running of the park.

In the first half part, the service concept, design and process of ICIUM service concept has been introduced. Of course, there are more aspects and details in this field. However, for this study, the content is enough for the readers to have a full image about the business. In the following part, the marketing related issues will be discussed.

### 3.5 Market environment and market segmentation

ICIUM theme park is built in Levi, which is one of the most popular ski resorts in Finland. The nearest airport is in Kittilä with 1114 landings and 214 500 air passengers (2010). There were 364 547 overnights at the hotels during the whole year 2010. During the winter months December-March there were c. 55 000 overnights at the hotels. Of those overnights c. 20 000 were foreign. Foreigners spend 4.61 nights at Levi in average while Finns spend 3.11 nights. There are also several log cabins (900 apartments) for rent. However, the tourists staying at the hotels are easier reach than the tourists staying at the cabins are. (Futuvisio Internal material)

The main target groups for Levi ICIUM marketing are partners, local service providers (e.g. safari companies), tour operators and travel agencies and Finnish & foreign consumers.

- Sponsor partners. The ICIUM concept suits well for engaging in a long-term cooperation, ranging from sponsored ice sculpts in the ICIUM to different kind of marketing campaigns. It is also possible to organize impressive one-off events such as customer or dealer conferences or other kind of company events. During the season 2010-2011 the main focus was on sponsored ice sculptures, with added value through visibility for the sponsors in print materials and internet sites. For the first ICIUM season 2010-2011 sponsorship agreements are made with Osuuskauppa Arina including Sokos Hotel Levi and S-market Levi, Mandatum and Carlsberg. Also Audi showed some interest towards ICIUM. From the Futuvisio point of view the most profitable partnership relationship was the co-operation with Arina, a co-operative with the HQ in Oulu. Arina has 135 000 member households with the green S-card in Northern Finland (62% of the house-



holds on the area). Futuvision offered a 2 € discount for the S-card holders from the adult and children ticket fees, and 5 € discount for the family tickets. In return, Arina offered two times direct mailing to the member households. Also two ice sculptures were sold for Arina: one for the local S-market and another for Sokos Hotel Levi.

- Local service providers. There are ten Destination Management Companies (DMC) at Levi. In addition to the DMCs there are also over ten safari companies organizing dog sledding, fishing, games and team building etc. Their clients are Finnish companies and foreign tour operators and travel agencies. There are also six hotels at Levi offering accommodation for over 55 000 travelers during the winter months December-March. These service providers are the key to the future success of Levi ICIUM. The local staff at Levi is in the key role in relation building with these service providers. They have been contacted by e-mail before the end of the first ICIUM season. An ICIUM group brochure in Finnish and English was sent to them as an attachment.
- Tour operators and travel agencies. The most important tour operators for Levi ICIUM success are Levi Travel Ltd. and Lapland Safaris Ltd. Levi Travel is the main local actor and Lapland Safaris is the biggest safari company in Lapland. The aim is to contact the most important tour operators bringing clients for Lapland either directly or through Levi Travel and/or Lapland Safaris.
- Finnish and foreign consumers. The target group most difficult to cover is the individual travelers coming not only to Levi, but also to other resorts in Finnish Lapland. In order to reach as many consumers as possible, Futuvision has development different promotion tools and strategies. In the following chapter, the author will introduce how the promotion related activities are organized. (Futuvision Internal materials)

### 3.6 Marketing strategies and promotion methods

#### 3.6.1 Web marketing

www.icium.fi web pages were launched well before the Grand Opening and the pages reached over 26 000 visitors (33 000 visits) before the season ended. The most important source for visitors was the www.levi.fi web page (where there is an ICIUM banner and section) that drove over 15 000 visitors to the page while Google search directed over 5000 visitors to the www.icium.fi pages. From Facebook we got over 1000 visitors and the Prizefinder was bringing c. 1000 visitors. (Futuvision Internal material)

In order to attract more visitors we created two competitions for the web. Our partners for the competition were AirBaltic, Sokos Hotels and Levi Travel Ltd. AirBaltic offered the flights to Kittilä, Sokos Hotels offered the Levi Travel offered a platform for promoting the competitions.

The first competition was on the www.radio86.com web site asking what China related element you would like to see at the ICIUM. A total of 3747 people answered to the competition, 58% of them Finnish, and 25% from

the English site and the rest from other language versions. The second competition was from the beginning of the year until the beginning of April when ICIUM was closed. The question is about what kind of Lapland related elements you would like to see at the next ICIUM. The results will be used later in this study. (Futuvision Internal material)

### 3.6.2 Promotional materials

- Levi Seven Seasons (size 215 x 280 mm, 36 pages) brochure is released in the end of August each year. Material for this brochure should be ready until the end of May. The material is sent in a PDF format to Levin Matkailu Oy in Finnish and in English. The brochure is released in English, German, French, Italian, Swedish, Norwegian, Spanish and Russian.
- ICIUM flyer (size A65) is printed by Futuvision and sent to Levi Travel in autumn. Levi travel takes care of the delivery to different locations and businesses in Levi area, including ski pass offices, hotels, cottages etc. In addition, ICIUM poster and ICIUM table card (for restaurants) are printed by Futuvision and sent to Levi Travel in autumn at the same time as the flyer.
- LeviDays magazine is published on paper and in electronic format (<http://www.levi.fi/fi/levi-info/levidays/lataa-levidays.html>). It is published 3 times a year: the spring issue, the summer issue, and the autumn issue.
- The Levi Times (Levin Sanomat) is an independent newspaper. It is published in the beginning of travel seasons.
- Levi.NYT! (<http://www.levinyt.fi/>) is published by Luhtaway Media & Tekniikka Oy 22 times a year. (Futuvision Internal material)

### 3.6.3 MTV3 television Ad campaign

During the spring 2011, timed at the Finnish skiing holidays on week 8-10 a 20+5 seconds (body and tail) TV Ad was ran in Lapland area. The ad was broadcasted 156 times and the expected local attendance reached up to 250 000 viewers. In addition to that, the actual viewer amount could be much bigger since the base number for potential viewers only counts the local inhabitants, not the tens of thousands of holiday spenders in Lapland area. Also a visitor inquiry was conducted during the time the TV Ad was showing. (Futuvision internal material)

### 3.6.4 Promotional events

- Opening ceremony  
The Grand Opening is held in December each year. In 2010 it was organized on 17.12. For the opening ceremony, relevant partners as well as governmental and municipal authorities (including the communication ministry of Finland and Chinese ambassador in Finland) and media are invited to make it a high-level event maximizing media exposure.

- Promotional exhibition  
Small sculptures are built around the Levi area, especially in the village. Besides these, ice sculpture promoting ICIUM was also built in Kittilä airport.

As a conclusion, in this chapter, the current situation of ICIUM theme park is described and analyzed. Readers are able to understand ICIUM theme park both externally and a bit internally. Indeed, ICIUM is a well designed concept either from service or marketing point of view. However, through the description and analysis, it should be paid attention that there are still shortages from service quality, management and marketing perspectives. Commissioned by Futuvision, the author needs to find out the challenges and solutions to the potential problems in the coming chapters.

## 4 CHALLENGES AND PROBLEMS

The challenges and problems of ICIUM theme park will be discussed in this chapter in two different views. Firstly from the customers' view, the author will use the questionnaire conducted in the park during the running of ICIUM season 2010-2011 and the results from web competition which was introduced earlier. The answers to those questions by the customers can help the author to find out what the customers' expectations are so that the author can understand what elements are still lacking from service design. In addition, the answers can also help the author to evaluate the effort of marketing strategy towards the targeted groups. Since the questionnaire was conducted before the study was planned and was designed for external customers, it does not reflect all the problems and challenges which are more potential and internal. Thus, secondly in this chapter, the author has to use his own experience and observations to conclude the rest challenges and problems.

### 4.1 Questionnaire and web competition

In the questionnaire, five questions are designed to help improve the service and the marketing effort. Appendix 2 shows the results.

Among all the visitors, almost 97% are from domestic market. More than half of the visitors are from Lapland region. But the current marketing strategies do not pay enough attentions to this region directly. Even there is TV advertisement on MTV3 broadcasted in Lapland area, the high cost and short period is the problem to the current marketing strategy.

To the question 'how did you hear about ICIUM', 26% of the visitors heard about ICIUM from TV. As it was introduced earlier in this study, the advertisement was placed during the three weeks skiing holidays. Obviously the effect of TV advertising is very significant to ICIUM income. But is the time period best for TV advertising? The author's answer is no. The TV ad strategy should be more specific towards different segmented customer groups from different domestic regional markets. The suggested improvement will be provided later in this study. Another interesting point is that around 25% of the customers decided to buy the tickets when they drove by and saw the park. This proves that ICIUM theme park's image seen from outside the wall is very important. However, compared with the fine sculptures in the park, the attractions from outside is not yet enough. The answers to the questionnaire also reflect the problem that the marketing strategy has not utilized our local partners so well. Including from Levi travel, local hotels and street advertising, in total only 5% of the customers knew about ICIUM. There are a lot to be improved from these sections; especially the street advertising with high marketing budget did not perform well enough.

More than 70% of the customers are families. ICIUM theme park is also designed to attract family customers as the major customers. However, in current marketing strategy, the promotion towards family and children is not performing well. The TV advertising is a good method to reach the

children. It again reflects the importance of TV advertising. But other promotion methods such as web marketing, promotional materials and promotion events did not reach the children customers efficiently. The children's influence in the decision-making procedure by their parents also takes an important role.

There are no charts made to visualize the answers to the question 'which sculptures were most exciting and why?' and 'what changes would you propose to ICIUM for the next season?' since the answers are all different. However, seeing from the result, the author finds out that the most two mentioned sculptures for season 2010-2011 were the great wall slide and the Helsinki Cathedral. From one hand, it shows most customers were expecting more excitement and the domestic customers preferred more about the building from their own nation. The current shortage of the design is that the excitement in the park is not enough to let the customers experience more than their expectations. Also, in table 4, it shows that the Finnish characteristic sculptures were too few compared to Chinese buildings. It is also a fact that both domestic and foreign visitors in Levi of Lapland shall expect more Finnish culture elements. From the other hand, even though some of the visitors selected the ice labyrinth as their favorite sculpture, the MingMing's adventure which is the theme of the park was not perceived by customers too much. It is a big failure from the author's point of view. There will be a lot to do to solve the problem that the theme of the park was not 'read' by the customers enough. From the suggestions to improve ICIUM, many of the customers wish to experience bigger and more exciting slide. Many of them also propose that ICIUM should create more activities such as party, wedding and games for the kids. The suggestions will be introduced and analyzed later in this study.

The web competition is held on two Internet websites ran by Futuvision. In Appendix 3, the results showed that the most expected sculptures in ICIUM are Santa Claus, northern lights, huskies and reindeers. Compared to foreign visitors, Fins are expecting even more Lappish elements. The results again reflect the problem that in current ICIUM theme park design, the local elements are too few compared to customers' expectation. As it was analyzed, it is totally understandable that visitors coming to Lapland are more interested in local natural and cultural elements.

From the author's point of view, the failure of delivering not enough local elements and the theme might lead to the failure of dissatisfying the customers. According to *Oliver's expectancy-disconfirmation* (Anderson and Fornell, 1994; Oliver, 1997), negative disconfirmation occurs when the service is worse than expected. This is regarded as one of major failure in service quality.

### 4.2 Own observation and experience

As it was explained, subject to reality, the questionnaire and web competition could not reflect the entire problems, especially internal and managerial ones. Based on the author's own experience, observation and conversation with colleagues, the author will have an overall look at the

whole service concept and point out potential problems from both service and marketing sides

### 4.2.1 Service quality and design reviews

Grönroos listed several criteria of good perceived service quality (table 2). According to him, the professional and skills is the outcome-related criteria. The builders of ICIUM are the most skilled ice sculptors from China and their professionals and skills of sculpturing is world-renowned. However, when they were designing the layout of ICIUM theme park, from the results we can see that they were still mainly using their familiar elements rather than the elements related to the target market which is in Lapland and the elements of ICIUM theme story. This is a failure in communication stage. Obviously the service concept was not delivered to the actual builders of the park so well. There was no systematic training before the design process started and there was a lack of communication between team in China and team in Finland.

To the process-related criteria, there were also some perspectives which need to be changed. Firstly, even though contact staff has already been trained before their work started, but the training focuses only on technical training such as how to operate the cash machine etc. There were no actual guidelines for the attitude and behavior towards the customers. These guidelines should be understood also by back-stage staffs. Secondly, there were too few methods to make customers generate reliability and trustworthiness towards ICIUM. Customers will purchase the service if they perceive the service provider as reliable organization; also, customers will introduce and recommend the service to others only if they feel the trustworthiness themselves. For ICIUM, there was no information given in any promotional materials and there was no information given in the park to build the customers' trust even though ICIUM is totally qualified for different safety issues by the authorities. Considering the fact that the park is built by fragile material and many visitors are kids, it is even more crucial to state, emphasize and remind the safety issues to the customers. Thirdly, there was no guideline made to help recovery immediately when something goes wrong. Preparation towards emergencies is not enough, and sometimes the staff was unable to respond to customers' complains. For example if the customers get hurts in the slide and the staff did not react properly towards customers' complains, it might bring much worse consequences such as complain to authorities.

In the service blueprint of ICIUM theme park, there were also few problems in different stages. At the start point, customers were already experiencing an inconvenient ticket sales operation. As it was introduced before, the ticket sales booth was 20 meters away from the gate and there were some personnel reading and checking ticket at the gate. This caused unnecessary human resource waste and brought inconvenience to the customers. The selling and checking of the tickets can be absolutely merged into one step. Problems also occurred in the field of human resource allocation. The personnel costs are the highest costs in this business, thus it is important to allocate the human resources efficiently in different periods.

For ICIUM season 2010-2011, most employees were hired from the beginning till end of April when the park was closed. In fact, the sales figure shows that the sales in January and February are much lower than the sales in the peak seasons during Christmas and ski holidays. There is a need to adjust the size of the team at site during different seasons.

About the design of the park, besides the major problems reflected in questionnaires and web competition results, there are also few technique related problems in design seen by the author. First problem concerns the maintenance of the park. In March and April when spring comes and there is more and more sunshine, the snow and ice sculptures were much affected by the direct sun light. The affection by the sun light should be taken into consideration in designs of each sculpture such as to which direction should the sculpture face. The other problem concerns the safety in the park. One of the most attractive sculptures in the park is the big great wall slide, but there are some potential safety risks. The slide is too high, the speed is too fast and protection at the end is not well designed, it was very dangerous especially when the maintenance was not made in time. In addition to the design problem, also there were not any warning signs except the one made for the slight. Kids loved to climb on the sculptures, the behavior was very dangerous and damaging the sculptures.

### 4.2.2 Marketing reviews

The questionnaires have reflected some of the efforts of current marketing strategy. Besides what have been discussed above, there are also some opportunities which the author has noticed but not yet applied for ICIUM.

- There was no advertisement of ICIUM during Levi Alpine Skiing World Cup. Levi becomes world famous for organizing the world cup competition, and the place where ICIUM is built is only 100 meters away from the competition slope. However, unfortunately no ICIUM advertisements were placed during the world cup time.
- There were too few festival promotional events organized in ICIUM compared to the promotional events organized outside ICIUM. During the opening of ICIUM, there are several global and national festivals such as Christmas, New Year, Valentine's Day, and Easter and so on. To different holidays with different cultural elements, ICIUM should organize different promotional events for each of the festival to attract public's attention.
- According to A. Clave & Salvador (2007), creating merchandises should be one of fundamental promotion method for theme parks. ICIUM has already created thematic merchandise; however, these merchandises are only sold in the shop in the park. It could not support promotion too much since the channels to introduce the merchandises to the public are too narrow. More channels should be used to sell the merchandises, besides the marketing efforts it brought; the sales can also generate revenues for the park.

In this chapter, the challenges and problems of ICIUM have been defined from two views. In the following chapter, the author will provide sugges-

tions to deal with the problems and challenges described here, which is crucial for this study.



## 5 SUGGESTIONS

The title of this study tells that this study aims to develop the ICIUM service concept and meanwhile to help adapt the service concept better in target market. The logic behind is to firstly develop the unified global service locally and then to use marketing methods to reach the potential audiences. After providing theoretical framework, current situation of service concept and challenges in the business, the author will eventually give his suggestions to solve the problems and improve the service so that it can be adapted in Levi market in a best way. As the way used earlier, in this chapter, the analysis will focus on two perspectives – tourism service and marketing.

### 5.1 How to make ICIUM a better service concept

#### 5.1.1 To integrate more local natural and cultural elements in the design

By collecting and analyzing customers' feedbacks from questionnaire and web competition, the author realizes that for a theme park no matter where it is built, it is important to integrate local cultural elements in the service design process. It is extremely important for theme parks in medium or small sizes like ICIUM since the targeted customers are those who visit Levi for their holiday. Obviously, people come to Lapland because of the unique cultural and natural environment. According to the web competition results (see in Appendix 3), both foreign and Finnish visitors have selected Santa Claus, reindeer and husky as their favorite figures for ICIUM. Thus in the design for next year, artists can integrate more of the above characteristic elements from Lapland. For instance, the artists can make three different sculptures for each element or make a larger sculpture combining the three elements at the same time. However, no matter how the artists are going to design, the theme of the park should be more highlighted so that ICIUM will not lose its uniqueness and the unified concept.

#### 5.1.2 To highlight the theme and help the customers understand the story

Another problem concerning the design of the park is that the theme/story of ICIUM is not perceived by the customers so well. As a result, showed in the questionnaire, almost all the theme-related sculptures were somehow 'ignored' by the customers. Even though in our promotional materials like brochures there is introduction about the story and images of our mascots, for most customers who visited the park, they were unable to understand the theme/story behind. The author has listed several possible methods to make up the drawbacks:

- To make more theme-related sculptures in the entrance area in addition to the mascots sculpture and build a snow wall, which allows the customers to give only a glance at the view inside the park. Some texts are written on the wall such as 'once upon a time, MingMing lives happily in a bamboo fairyland...' The park will show its mysteries at

the very beginning during customers' visits. On the other hand, from customers' points of view, they are able to get to know the background of theme and they will be more motivated and interested to seek the development of the story. This will definitely improve customers' experiences in the service especially for those customers who have heard about the story before the visits.

- To make more theme-related sculptures in the park and to enhance the design of the current sculptures. As table 4 shows, there were only five theme-related sculptures in total including only one main sculpture which is the labyrinth. The designs were too simple and the sculptures were too small to make visitors understand the story behind. In figure 11, the park is segmented into five parts. It is thus needed to have at least one sculpture, which is big enough to tell the story at each stage in each part of the area. If the technique supports, the mascots should be colored in order to be highlighted. Otherwise, the mascots will be wrongly recognized as normal animals and this will again bring a failure in the delivery of the theme.
- To introduce the sculptures by making introduction signs next to the sculptures. Snow and ice sculptures are anyway artworks. The materials used are only natural snow and ice resources. So it is a fact that it's impossible to make everybody understand the meaning behind the artworks. However, as a theme park, which is different from normal snow and ice exhibition, ICIUM has to deliver the theme out. A solution to solve the contradiction is to help customers understand with written descriptions on other materials. It helps the visitors to understand the theme by reading the stories. It will not make the visitors bored; instead it offers a space for the visitors to imagine since the fantastic sculptures are standing next to them.

### 5.1.3 To design more interactive activities

There were only two interactive activities which customers can experience and involve - sliding and the labyrinth. Both two sculptures were selected as the most welcomed ones and the great wall slide ranks number one in the vote. Also in the questionnaire customers were expecting more activities which they can involve. For the next year ICIUM, the two popular designs should be kept; meanwhile more activities should be designed to offer customers better experience. The possible activities for next year:

- Ice bowling or ice curling game. These two activities are suitable for visitors in different ages. The park can provide the needed tools and ground can be made easily from ice. The playground can be made in front of the shop so that the sales person in the shop can help organize the game when needed.
- Skating. Skating is one of young people's favorite games. According to the research, there is not any skating ground in Levi. This brings also a good business opportunity for ICIUM. ICIUM can either build a small area within park or build a larger area next to the park outside in cooperation with Levi Ski Resort.

#### 5.1.4 Training for the designers and builders of ICIUM

As it has been described in the challenges chapter, there is need to train the designers and builders when the team is built up. Futuvision as the project holder and concept owner of ICIUM theme park should communicate with the Chinese partner more closely. Futuvision should explain the concept clearly to the actual designers and involve more in the designing process. From one hand, Futuvision has to emphasize the important elements in the design to the designers. From the other hand, Futuvision has to respect the designers' realistic thinking so that an executive design can be worked out. Thus, it is very important to build good communication channels between the two parties.

#### 5.1.5 Set up guidelines for service providers

In order to standardize the service provided by the on-stage staffs, the management should create a uniformed service guideline. The information should include not only the guidelines for the use of equipment, but also to standardize the service attitude, and provide guides in emergencies for the customers.

#### 5.1.6 Improvement in reducing human resource costs

As it was mentioned, there were two problems existing in the allocation of human resources.

- Change the current ticket selling and checking process. Currently the ticket sales booth is some 20 meters away from the entrance gate. In fact, the booth can be removed to a closer place to the gate. One worker standing in front the gate is no longer needed if a pathway is designed between the booth and the gate. Customers can immediately enter the park with the ticket through the pathway and the sales person in the booth can also monitor the stream of people at the same time.
- The number of sales persons hired should depend on the number of visitors to ICIUM theme park. From mid-December to mid-January and from late-February till the end, more sales persons can be hired compared to the slow season in January and February. In slow season, ICIUM site management team members can also be given sales works as long as it does not affect their main work.

#### 5.1.7 Other technical improvements

- The design of the park should take sunshine into consideration. From March the sunshine harms the sculptures very badly. The geography should be assessed and the direction where sunshine comes should be figured out. In the design, the fine parts and faces of the sculptures should be protected from the direct sunshine. Snow walls can also be used to help keep the ice sculptures for a longer time.

- The height of the great wall should be lower and the end of the slope should be designed longer. The reason is to improve the safety of the great wall slide by reducing the speed and the strike strength.
- The warning signs should be made and placed on the sculptures. Snow and ice sculptures especially the fine sculptures are in fact very fragile. It's dangerous for kids to climb on the sculptures. Also the life of the sculptures can be kept longer with better protection methods.

### 5.2 How to improve the efficiency of marketing

#### 5.2.1 Adjust TV advertising strategy

The current advertising campaign has been introduced earlier already. From the author's point of view, the current strategy is not focusing enough. In Appendix 2, the results demonstrate that half of the visitors are from Lappish area, 12.8% are from Southern Finland, 18.8% are from Western Finland and 5.9% are from Eastern Finland. It is important to have TV ads in Lapland area during the three weeks' skiing holidays so that visitors in Levi all have the possibilities to see the ads from TV. However, it is also strongly recommended to have ads running also in other regions for a short period such as one week's time before the ski holidays start. Besides skiing holidays, during the last days in December and Eas-  
ters, it is also worth investing on TV campaigns.

#### 5.2.2 To strengthen the cooperation with local partners

Futuvision, the holder of ICIUM project has built good relationship with local partners including hotels, restaurants, travel agencies and safari companies. However, this channel was not utilized so well, as a result, less than 5% of the visitors got know about ICIUM from the partners. Some ideas are offered to enhance the relationship and cooperation with the local partners:

- Deliver more promotion materials to the partners such as fliers and posters. Customers should see ICIUM's advertisement through more channels and these advertisements should be placed in more conspicuous places.
- ICIUM can also provide local partners' promotion materials to the customers. In return, the advertisement of ICIUM should be more visible in the restaurants, hotel room, etc.
- Build up personal relationship with employees working for the local partners. Complimentary tickets can be delivered to the personnel who work directly towards visitors in Levi. In addition, ICIUM can also organize an opening party and invite those personnel to attend. In return, the front line workers will be more willing to introduce ICIUM to the customers who consult from them.

### 5.2.3 Attract children's attentions

ICIUM theme park is a fun park mainly for families. Kids' interest is also an important criterion in family's selection. TV advertising is one good method to attract kids. For theme parks, the use of actors dressed as mascots is also a good idea. Costume for MingMing Panda was already produced. During the busy seasons, the actors in costume can be sent in the center of the town to attract kids' attentions.

### 5.2.4 Promotion of ICIUM merchandizes

The current sales and promotion channel of ICIUM merchandizes is only through sales in the shop located in ICIUM theme park. The result is that the sales performance was in bad condition and the theme-related merchandizes did not promote the service concept and the theme park effectively. At least two additional methods can be utilized. Firstly the merchandises should be sold in the online shop on ICIUM official website. The online shop is an international platform to spread the ICIUM service concept. It is also supporting the globalization of ICIUM service concept in the future. Secondly, the merchandises should be sold in shops around Levi area. Futuvision should establish sales cooperation with local supermarkets, shops and souvenir shops so that the merchandizes can be seen around the whole Levi area. Getting high margin is not as important as promoting the concept and theme of ICIUM. A contract benefiting the local partners is worth being signed.

### 5.2.5 Enhance cooperation with sponsorship partners

In season 2010 – 2011, ICIUM has several sponsorship partners such as S-group, Carlsberg and Mandatum Life. As agreed, their logo sculptures were made and displayed in the park, in return the sponsors had to pay an amount of money to Futuvision. In the future, the model can be adjusted and the mutual benefits between the two parties should be more emphasized. For next year ICIUM sponsorship cooperation, Futuvision can reduce the prices for sponsorship and in return, the sponsors should be responsible to promote ICIUM to their customers through their own channels such as member magazines and promotional materials.

### 5.2.6 Advertising during Levi Alpine Skiing World Cup

The ICIUM theme park construction started right after the Levi World Cup next to the competition slope. During the world cup time, the events are covered by both domestic and worldwide media. At that time, ICIUM advertisements can already be placed around Levi. Such as building ice sculptures in Levi center and making billboards to promote the park at the site.

#### 5.2.7 Plan and organize festival events in ICIUM

ICIUM should utilize the promotion opportunities in every festival during the season. The management should design the activity for each festival by integrating the unique characteristics. These unique characteristics will become the attracting points for the customers. Moreover, these activities can be promoted through ICIUM official website, Levi official websites and other promotion materials.

As a conclusion for this chapter, suggestions are made towards the potential problems and challenges. From service point of view, ICIUM theme park should provide the visitors better experiences by uplifting the park's uniqueness, design, story and image as well as the services quality provided by the onstage staff. From marketing point of view, ICIUM should enhance the current marketing strategy and open new marketing channels. In one sentence, the service concept should be developed and adapted to Levi market better and better in order to reach the business objectives.

## 6 CONCLUSION

This study was commissioned by Futuvision Technologies Oy. Futuvision Oy is the project holder of ICIUM- Wonderworld of Ice which is a theme park built with snow and ice materials. Futuvision aims to create a new global unified and unique service concept and the theme of the park follows the synopsis of MingMing's adventure, which is a series of books published by Futuvision. The first ICIUM theme park was built in Levi, Lapland in Northern Finland. As a trial, the first ICIUM theme park has helped Futuvision to gain much experience of how to expand and localize the global service concept worldwide in the near future. At the end of the season 2010-2011, the author who was working as a project assistant was commissioned to do a study. Through collecting materials and information, doing researches and interviews, and comparing and analyzing the results, the author was aiming to summarize the first season and to come up with problems and solutions in order to improve the business from all aspects.

By utilizing and integrating books, internal materials and internet sources, the author is able to gather relevant information and background knowledge for this study. Based on the structure used in theoretical part, a description and analysis for the past season is given by the author through combining materials and own experiences. In this study, in addition to the author's own observation, a questionnaire conducted during the season and the results from web competitions on ICIUM official website are used to seek and define the challenges and potential problems. Lastly, in this study, author provides his personal suggestion on how to improve the service and to adapt the business concept better in local market in Levi Lapland.

Considering the study as an absolute practical case, the author realizes it is not possible to find theories, which could solve the problems occurred in the specific new field. Instead, the theoretical part in this study is a framework for the whole study to help the author view and think about the whole service concept as a full picture. In the contents, service design and service marketing theories are introduced separately. The author describes and analyzes all the important criteria in providing an excellent service to customers and elements in making best marketing efforts. Of course, the theories can be analyzed deeper and wider. However, for this study, the theoretical part can already support a thorough analysis in this case. After studying the theories, the author has learnt the relationship between a successful service concept and the elements of customer satisfaction, service quality and service design. This supports to solve the problems existing in the field of perceived services towards customers and of internal managerial practices. On the other hand, the marketing theory study has helped the author understand the basic important elements in a successful marketing strategy.

Supported by the theoretical part, the description and analysis of the past ICIUM season are given. From service and management point of view, the author goes through the elements in layout, design, theme, management, service model and partners of ICIUM theme park. From marketing point

of view, the author goes through the market environment and segmentation, marketing strategies and promotion methods for ICIUM service concept. After providing all the important information of ICIUM, the author wishes the customer could have a thorough understand of ICIUM service concept and the theme park at the same time. It also supports the author to establish a systematic framework to find out the problems hiding behind.

The chapters of defining problems and providing solutions can be regarded as a whole package. The frameworks used are the same and related closely to the theoretical part in this study. Problems existing in service, management and marketing perspectives are all covered. The solutions to those problems were provided specifically. Considering the nature and aim of this study, the author provides the solutions, which are all practical methods.

In general, the development of a unified global service concept should focus on the targeting customers. The needs and expectations of the potential customers should be always analyzed and paid attention. As an example discovered in this study, the image of the destination was already planted in tourists' minds, a service provider can never ignore the importance of integrating the local image into different types of services. The marketing strategy should also focus on the customers. In additional, the influence of local people in marketing and promotion should be emphasized and utilized. Only by focusing on target customers and combing the execution of implementing global unified service concept and the utilization and integration of local resources, elements and people, the actual service concept will have the possibility to success in any market around the world.



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## QUESTIONNAIRE

Dear visitor,

We want to develop our ICIUM Wonderworld of Ice according to our customers' needs. Your answer is valuable to us. You can also participate in our competition. 10 lucky customers will win an ICIUM T-shirt and a storybook. If you wish to participate in the competition, please write your contact information on this paper. The names of the winners will be published on [www.icium.fi](http://www.icium.fi) website. Your contact information will not be used on any other purposes.

How did you hear about ICIUM? You can choose as many options as necessary.

- ☐ from a newspaper/magazine
- ☐ from Internet
- ☐ from TV
- ☐ from a billboard
- ☐ from a friend or relative
- ☐ from Levi central booking office
- ☐ from a local hotel
- ☐ other, where? \_\_\_\_\_

Which country are you from?

\_\_\_\_\_

Are you visiting ICIUM

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> with your family    | <input type="checkbox"/> alone              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> with your friends   | <input type="checkbox"/> other, what? _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> with your workmates | _____                                       |

Which sculpture was the most exciting?

\_\_\_\_\_

Why?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

What changes would you propose to ICIUM for the next season?

\_\_\_\_\_

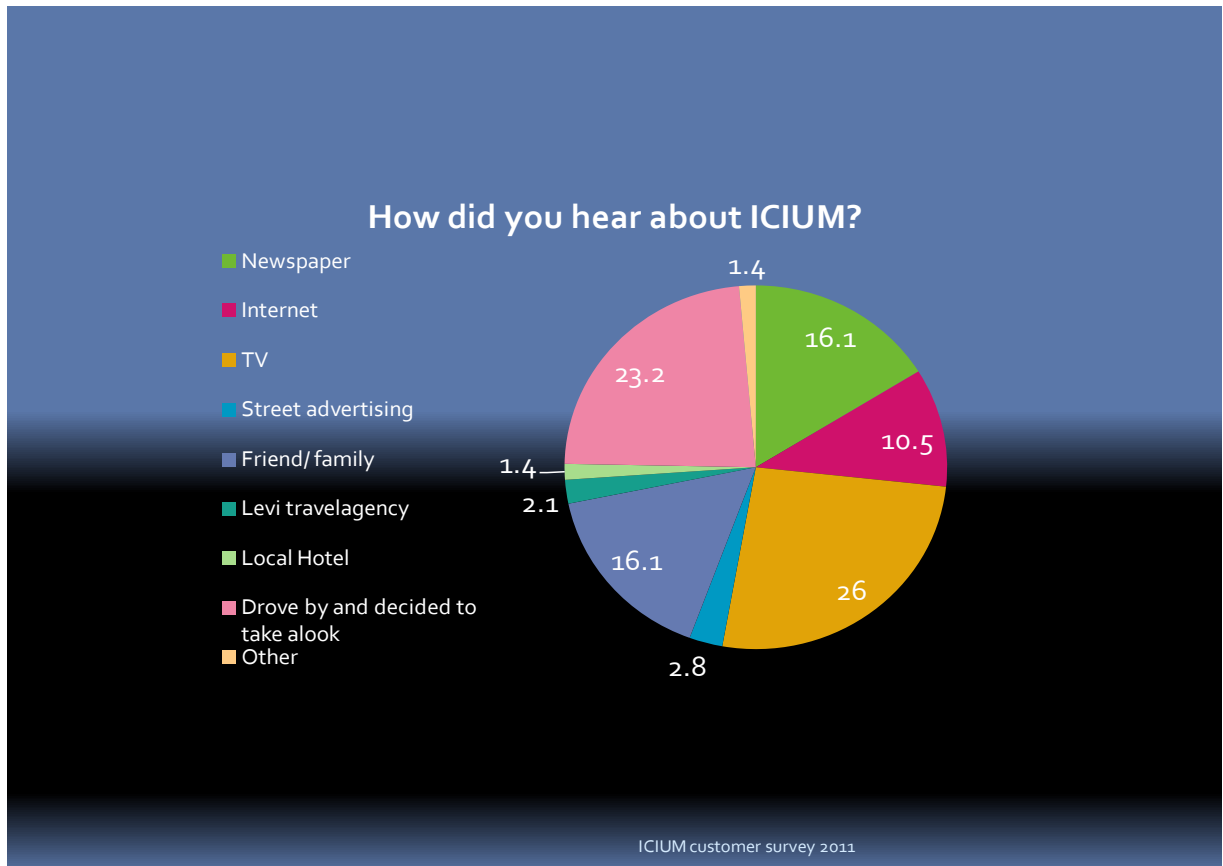
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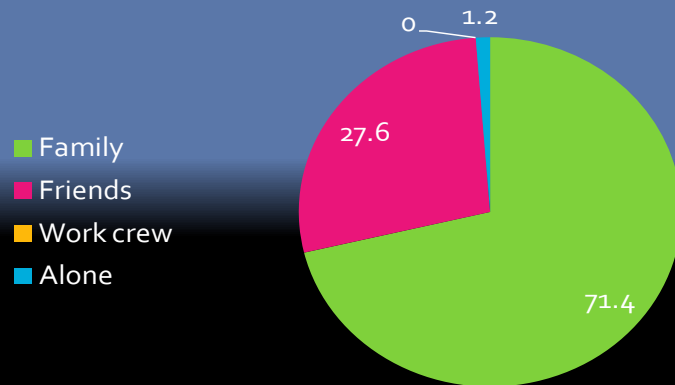
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## QUESTIONNAIRE RESULTS

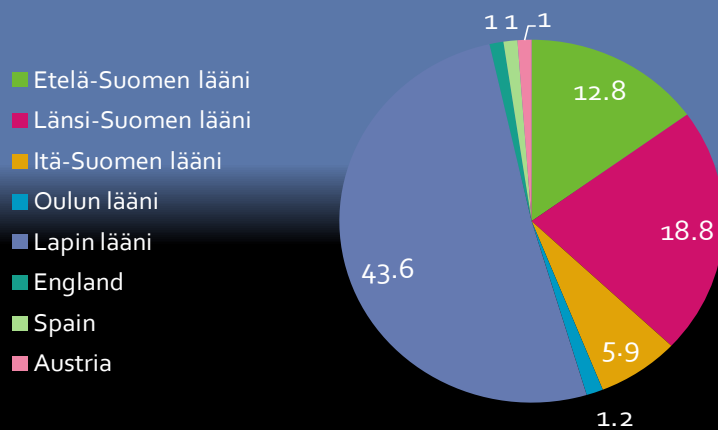


### Who did you come with?



ICIUM customer survey 2011

### Where are you from?



ICIUM customer survey 2011